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PARTISAN REVIEW

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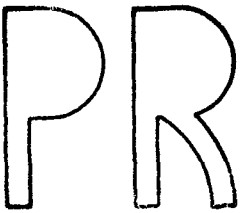

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CONTRIBUTORS

FRANK KERMODE, who contributes frequently to **Partisan Review, Encounter,** and other magazines, teaches at Manchester University in England.

W. S. MERWIN is the author of **A Mask for Janus, The Dancing Bears** and other volumes of verse.

DONALD LEHMKUHL, who lives in New York City, is translating a book on Cocteau to be published by Grove Press.

JASCHA KESSLER, who teaches at Hamilton College, has published poems in many periodicals and is at present at work on a novel.

ROBERT M. ADAMS is in the English department of Cornell University.

SELMA FRAIBERG teaches at The School of Social Work of Tulane University in New Orleans.

KENNETH KOCH's most recent book is **Ko, or A Season on Earth.**

COLIN MACINNES is a young English writer whose latest novel is **Absolute Beginners.**

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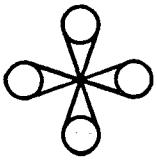

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Lionel Trilling

ON THE MODERN ELEMENT IN MODERN LITERATURE*

The title I have given to this discourse makes reference to a lecture which Matthew Arnold delivered a little over a century ago. I cannot expect a quick and general recognition of the allusion, for this particular one of Arnold's lectures is not widely known. "On the Modern Element in Literature" has a signal importance in its author's career—it was Arnold's first lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and it inaugurated not only his professorship but his career in criticism. The lecture as it was delivered in 1857 was a great success, but Arnold was not pleased with it; he never wanted it to be part of the canon of his work, he never put it into any of the volumes of critical essays he brought out in his lifetime.[1] Yet he did not entirely disown it; after the passage of a decade he published it in *Macmillan's Magazine,* explaining that he did so because it made a certain point about the nature of Hellenism which at that time needed to be made. He apologized for the inadequacy of the piece in a prefatory note, speaking of its deficiencies in content, but more emphatically of its wrongness of tone. He said that it was composed in a style which he had since learned to dislike,

* An expanded version of a lecture delivered at Vanderbilt University in the spring of 1960 and later in the year at Boston College.

1. The lecture, although republished from time to time, was for many years difficult to come by, but this year it has been made accessible in *Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold,* edited by Fraser Neiman (Harvard University Press) and in *On the Classical Tradition,* edited by R. H. Super, the first volume of the projected *Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (The University of Michigan Press).

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what he called the style of the "doctor" rather than in the style which he called that of the "explorer." In describing the rejected style as that of the doctor, Arnold very likely had in mind the Scriptural injunction which he liked to quote, "Be ye not called Rabbi," that is to say, Be ye not called doctor—be ye not one who claims to have the doctrine.

At this distance of time from him, we incline to think of Arnold as the doctor *par excellence,* as the man above all others writing in English who fixed the critical doctrine and handed it down. But he thought of himself in quite the opposite way, as a spirit *ondoyant et divers,* flexible and various, as a mind peculiarly individual and personal, asking the question which, as he said, Goethe had taught modern Europe to ask: "But is it true? Is it true for *me?*" In his own sense of himself as a critic, he was the explorer, with all that the word may suggest of freedom, curiosity, risk.

I shall presently recur to Arnold's lecture in a substantive way, but I refer now to Arnold's remarks about its style in order to find sanction for the mode in which I shall deal with my subject. I have the intention of talking about a certain theme which appears frequently in modern literature—so frequently, indeed, and in so striking a manner, that it may be said to constitute one of the shaping and controlling ideas of our epoch. I can identify it by calling it the disenchantment of our culture with culture itself—it seems to me that the characteristic element of modern literature, or at least of the most highly developed modern literature, is the bitter line of hostility to civilization which runs through it. It happens that my present awareness of this theme is involved in a personal experience, and I am impelled to speak of the theme not abstractly but as it actually exists for me, with the husks of my experience clinging untidily to it. If Arnold is right, if the critic should be the explorer rather than the doctor, then the avowedly personal mode cannot be wholly unbecoming to him, it is not inappropriate to the critic's function to talk about his personal experience of an idea. And I shall go so far

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in doing this as to describe the actual circumstances in which the experience took place. These circumstances are pedagogic—they consist of some problems in teaching modern literature to undergraduates and my attempt to solve these problems. And perhaps I ought to admit at once that, as much as about modern literature itself, I am talking about the teaching of modern literature. I know that pedagogy is a depressing subject to all persons of sensibility, and yet I shall not apologize for speaking about it because the teaching of literature and especially modern literature constitutes one of the most salient and significant characteristics of the culture of our time. Indeed, if we are on the hunt for *the* modern element of modern literature, we might want to find it in the susceptibility of modern literature to being made into an academic subject.

Here, then, is my experience.

For some years I have taught the course in modern literature in Columbia College. I did not undertake the course without misgiving and I have never taught it with an undivided mind. My doubts do not refer to the value of the literature itself, only to the educational propriety of its being studied in college. These doubts persist in the face of my entire awareness that the relation of our collegiate education to modernity is no longer an open question. The unargued assumption of most curriculums is that the real subject of all study is the modern world; that the justification of all study is its immediate and presumably practical relevance to modernity; that the true purpose of all study is to lead the young person to be at home in, and in control of, the modern world. There is really no way of quarreling with this belief, nor with what follows upon it, the framing of curriculums of which the substance is chiefly contemporary or at least makes ultimate reference to what is contemporary.

It might be asked why anyone should *want* to quarrel with this assumption. To that question I can only return a defensive, eccentric, self-depreciatory answer. It is this: that to some of us, as we go on teaching, if we insist on thinking of our students as

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the creators of the intellectual life of the future, there comes a kind of despair. It does not come because our students fail to respond to ideas, rather because they respond to ideas with a happy vagueness, a delighted glibness, a joyous sense of power in the use of received or receivable generalizations, a grateful wonder at how easy it is to formulate and judge, at how little resistance language offers to their intentions. When that despair strikes us, we are tempted to give up the usual and accredited ways of evaluating education, and instead of prizing responsiveness and aptitude, we set store by some sign of personal character in our students, some token of individual will. We think of this as taking the form of resistance and imperviousness, of personal density or gravity, of some power of supposing that ideas are real, a power which will lead a young man to say, "But is this really true—is it true for me?" And to say this not in the modern way, not following the progressive educational prescription to "think for yourself," which means to think in the progressive pieties rather than in the conservative pieties (if any of the latter do still exist), but to say it from his sense of himself as a person rather than as a bundle of attitudes and responses which are all alert to please the teacher and the progressive community.

We can't do anything about the quality of personal being of our students, but we are led to think about the cultural analogue of a personal character that is grave, dense, and resistant—we are led to think about the past. Perhaps the protagonist of Thomas Mann's story, "Disorder and Early Sorrow" comes to mind, that sad Professor Cornelius with his intense and ambivalent sense of history. For Professor Cornelius, who is a historian, the past is dead, is death itself, but for that very reason it is the source of order, value, piety, and even love. If we think about education in the dark light of the despair I have described, we wonder if perhaps there is not to be found in the past that quiet place at which a young man might stand for a few years, at least a little beyond the competing attitudes and generalizations of the present, at least a little beyond the contemporary prob-

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lems which he is told he can master only by means of attitudes and generalizations, that quiet place in which he can be silent, in which he can *know* something—in what year the Parthenon was begun, the order of battle at Trafalgar, how Linear B was deciphered: almost anything at all that has nothing to do with the talkative and attitudinizing present, anything at all rather than variations of the accepted formulations about *anxiety,* and *urban society,* and *alienation,* and *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft,* all the matter of the academic disciplines which are founded upon the modern self-consciousness and the modern self-pity. The modern self-pity is certainly not without its justification; but, if the grounds for our self-pity are ever to be overcome, we must sometimes wonder whether that task is likely to be accomplished by minds which are taught in youth to accept these sad conditions of ours as ineluctable, and as the only right objects of contemplation. And quite apart from any practical consequences, there is the simple aesthetic personal pleasure of having to do with young minds, and maturing minds, which are free of cant, which are, to quote an old poet, "fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy."

This line of argument I have called eccentric and maybe it ought to be called obscurantist and reactionary. Whatever it is called, it is not likely to impress a Committee on the Curriculum. It was, I think, more or less the line of argument of my department in Columbia College, when, up to a few years ago, it decided, whenever the question came up, not to carry its courses beyond the late nineteenth century. But our rationale could not stand against the representations which a group of students made to our dean and which he communicated to us. The students wanted a course in modern literature—very likely, in the way of students, they said that it was a scandal that no such course was being offered in the College. There was no argument that could stand against this expressed desire: we could only capitulate, and then, with pretty good grace, muster the arguments that justified our doing so. Was not the twentieth century more than

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half over? Was it not nearly fifty years since Eliot wrote "Portrait of a Lady"? George Meredith had not died until 1909, and even the oldest among us had read one of his novels in a college course—many American universities had been quick to bring into their purview the literature of the later nineteenth century, and even the early twentieth century; there was a strong supporting tradition for us. Had not Yeats been Matthew Arnold's contemporary for twenty-three years?

Our resistance to the idea of the course had never been based on an adverse judgment of the literature itself. We are a department not only of English but of comparative literature, and if the whole of modern literature is surveyed, it could be said—and we were willing to say it—that no literature of the past matched the literature of our time in power and magnificence. Then too, it is a difficult literature, and it is difficult not merely as defenders of modern poetry say that all literature is difficult. We nowadays believe that Keats is a very difficult poet, but his earlier readers did not. We now see the depths and subtleties of Dickens, but his contemporary readers found him as simply available as a plate of oysters on the half shell. Modern literature, however, shows its difficulties at first blush; they are literal as well as doctrinal difficulties, and they are to be dealt with by young men brought up with a lax secondary education and an abstract and generalized college education—if our students are to know their modern literary heritage, surely they need all the help that a teacher can give?

These made cogent reasons for our decision to establish, at long last, the course in modern literature. They also made a ground for our display of a certain mean-spirited, last-ditch vindictiveness. I recall that we said something like, "Very well, if they want the modern, let them have it—let them have it, as Henry James says, full in the face. We shall give the course, but we shall give it on the highest level, and if they think, as students do, that the modern is the facile, the easily comprehended, let them have their gay and easy time with Yeats and Eliot, with

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Joyce and Proust and Kafka, with Lawrence, Mann, and Gide."

Eventually the course fell to me to give. I approached it with an uneasiness which has not diminished with the passage of time—it has, I think, even increased. It arises, this uneasiness, from my personal relation with the works that form the substance of the course. Almost all of them have been involved with me for a long time—I invert the natural order not out of lack of modesty but taking the cue of W. H. Auden's remark that a real book reads us. I have been read by Eliot's poems and by *Ulysses* and by *Remembrance of Things Past* and by *The Castle* for a good many years now, since early youth. Some of these books at first rejected me; I bored them. But as I grew older and they knew me better, they came to have more sympathy with me and to understand my hidden meanings. Their nature is such that our relationship has been very intimate. No literature has ever been so shockingly personal as ours—it asks every question that is forbidden in polite society. It asks us if we are content with our marriages, with our family lives, with our professional lives, with our friends. It is all very well for me to describe my course in the college catalogue as "paying particular attention to the role of the writer as a critic of his culture"—this is sheer evasion: the questions asked by our literature are not about our culture but ourselves. It asks us if we are content with ourselves, if we are saved or damned—more than with anything else, our literature is concerned with salvation. No literature has even been so intensely spiritual as ours. I do not venture to call it religious, but certainly it has the special intensity of concern with the spiritual life which Hegel noted when he spoke of the great modern phenomenon of the secularization of spirituality.

I do not know how other teachers deal with this extravagant personal force of modern literature, but for me it makes difficulty. Nowadays the teaching of literature inclines to a considerable technicality, but when the teacher has said all that can be said about formal matters, about verse-patterns, metrics, prose conventions, irony, tension, etc., he must confront the necessity of

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bearing personal testimony. He must use whatever authority he may possess to say whether or not a work is true; and if not, why not; and if so, why so. He can do this only at considerable cost to his privacy. How does one say that Lawrence is right in his great rage against the modern emotions, against the modern sense of life and ways of being, unless one speaks from the intimacies of one's own feelings, and one's own sense of life, and one's own wished-for way of being? How, except with the implication of personal judgment, does one say to students that Gide is perfectly accurate in his representation of the awful boredom and slow corruption of respectable life? Then probably one rushes in to say that this doesn't of itself justify homosexuality and the desertion of one's dying wife, certainly not. But then again, having paid one's *devoirs* to morality, how does one rescue from morality Gide's essential point about the supreme rights of the individual person, and without making it merely historical and totally academic?

My first response to the necessity of dealing with matters of this kind was resentment of the personal discomfort it caused me. These are subjects we usually deal with either quite unconsciously or in the privacy of our own conscious minds, and if we now and then disclose our thoughts about them, it is to friends of equal age and especial closeness. Or if we touch upon them publicly, we do so in the relative abstractness and anonymity of print. To stand up in one's own person and to speak of them in one's own voice to an audience which each year grows younger as one grows older—that is not easy, and probably it is not decent.

And then, leaving aside the personal considerations, or taking them merely as an indication of something wrong with the situation, can we not say that, when modern literature is brought into the classroom, the subject being taught is betrayed by the pedagogy of the subject? We have to ask ourselves whether in our day too much does not come within the purview of the academy. More and more, as the universities liberalize them-

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selves, and turn their beneficent imperialistic gaze upon what is called Life Itself, the feeling grows among our educated classes that little can be experienced unless it is validated by some established intellectual discipline, with the result that experience loses much of its personal immediacy for us and becomes part of an accredited societal activity. This is not entirely true and I don't want to play the boring academic game of pretending that it *is* entirely true, that the university mind wilts and withers whatever it touches. I must believe, and I do believe, that the university study of art is capable of confronting the power of a work of art fully and courageously. I even believe that it can discover and disclose power where it has not been felt before. But the university study of art achieves this and chiefly with works of art of an older period. Time has the effect of seeming to quiet the work of art, domesticating it and making it into a classic, which is often another way of saying that it is an object of merely habitual regard. University study of the right sort can reverse this process and restore to the old work its freshness and force—can, indeed, disclose unguessed-at power. But with the works of art of our own present age, university study tends to accelerate the process by which the radical and subversive work becomes the classic work, and university study does this in the degree that it is vivacious and responsive and what is called non-academic. In one of his poems Yeats mocks the literary scholars, "the bald heads forgetful of their sins," "the old, learned, respectable bald heads," who edit the poems of the fierce and passionate young men.

Lord, what would they say
Did their Catullus walk this way?

Yeats, of course, is thinking of his own future fate, and no doubt there is all the radical and comical discrepancy that he sees between the poet's passions and the scholars' close-eyed concentration on the text. Yet for my part, when I think of Catullus, I am moved to praise the tact of all those old heads, from Heinsius

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and Bentley to Munro and Postgate, who worked on Codex G and Codex O and drew conclusions from them about the lost Codex V—for doing only this and for not trying to realize and demonstrate the true intensity and the true quality and the true cultural meaning of Catullus's passion and managing to bring it somehow into eventual accord with their respectability and baldness. Nowadays we who deal with books in universities live in fear that the World—which we imagine to be a vital, palpitating, passionate, reality-loving World—will think of us as old, respectable, and bald, and we see to it that in our dealings with Yeats—to take him as the example—his wild cry of rage and sexuality is heard by our students and quite thoroughly understood by them as—what is it that we eventually call it?—a significant expression of our culture. The exasperation of Lawrence and the subversiveness of Gide, by the time we have dealt with them boldly and straightforwardly, are notable instances of the *alienation of modern man as exemplified by the artist.* "Compare Yeats, Gide, Lawrence, and Eliot in the use which they make of the theme of sexuality to criticize the deficiencies of modern culture. Support your statement by specific references to the work of each author." Time: one hour. And the distressing thing about our examination questions is that they are not ridiculous, they make perfectly good sense—such good sense that the young person who answers them can never again know the force, the terror, of what has been communicated to him by the works he is being examined on.

Very likely it was with the thought of saving myself from the necessity of speaking personally and my students from the betrayal of the full harsh meaning of a great literature that I first taught my course in as *literary* a way as possible. A couple of decades ago the discovery was made that a literary work is a structure of words: this doesn't seem a surprising thing to have learned except in its polemical tendency, which is to urge us to minimize the amount of attention we give to the poet's social and personal will, to what he wants to happen outside the poem

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as a result of the poem; it urges us to fix our minds on what is going on inside the poem. For me this polemical tendency has been of the greatest usefulness, for it has corrected my inclination to pay attention chiefly to what the poet *wants*. For two or three years I directed my efforts toward dealing with the matter of the course chiefly as structures of words, in a formal way with due attention paid to the literal difficulty which marked so many of the works. But it went against the grain. It went against my personal grain. It went against the grain of the classroom situation, for formal analysis is best carried on by question-and-answer, which needs small groups, and the registration for the course in modern literature in any college is sure to be large. And it went against the grain of the authors themselves—structures of words they may indeed have created, but these structures were not pyramids or triumphal arches, they were manifestly contrived not to be static and commemorative but mobile and aggressive, and one does not describe a quinquireme or a howitzer or a tank without estimating how much *damage* it can do.

Eventually I had to decide that there was only one way to give the course, which was to give it without strategies and without conscious caution. It was not honorable, neither to the students nor to the authors, to conceal or disguise my relation to the literature, my commitment to it, my fear of it, my ambivalence toward it. The literature had to be dealt with in the terms it announced for itself. As for the students, I have never given assent to the modern saw about "teaching students, not subjects" —I have always thought it right to teach subjects, believing that if one gives his first loyalty to the subject, the student is best instructed. So I resolved to give the course with no considerations in mind except my own interests. And since my own interests lead me to see literary situations as cultural situations, and cultural situations as great elaborate fights about moral issues, and moral issues as having something to do with gratuitously chosen images of personal being, and images of personal being as having something to do with literary style, I felt free to begin with what

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for me was a first concern, the animus of the author, the objects of his will, the things he wants or wants to have happen.

I went so far in my cultural and non-literary method as to decide that I would begin the course with a statement of certain themes or issues that might especially engage our attention. I even went so far in non-literariness as to think that my purposes would best be served if I could contrive a "background" for the works we would read—I wanted to propose a history for the themes or issues that I hoped to discover. I did not intend that this history should be either very extensive or very precise. I wanted merely a *sense* of a history, some general intuition of a past. And because there is as yet no adequate general work of history of the culture of the last two hundred years, I asked myself what books of the age just preceeding ours had most influenced our literature, or, since I was far less concerned with showing influence than with discerning a tendency, what older books might seem to fall into a line the direction of which pointed to our own literature and thus might serve as a prolegomenon to the course.

It was virtually inevitable that the first work that should have sprung to mind was Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough,* not, of course, the whole of it, but certain chapters, those that deal with Osiris, Attis, and Adonis. Anyone who thinks about modern literature in a systematic way takes for granted the great part played in it by myth, and especially by those examples of myth which tell about gods dying and being reborn—the imagination of death and rebirth, reiterated in the ancient world in innumerable variations that are yet always the same, captivated the literary mind at the very moment when, as all accounts of the modern age agree, the most massive and compelling of all the stories of resurrection had lost much of its hold upon the world.

Perhaps no book has had so decisive an effect upon modern literature as Frazer's. It was beautifully to my purpose that it had first been published ten years before the twentieth century began. Yet forty-three years later, in 1933, Frazer delivered a

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lecture, very eloquent, in which he bade the world be of good hope in the face of the threat to the human mind that was being offered by the Nazi power. He was still alive in 1941. Yet he had been born in 1854, three years before Matthew Arnold gave the lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature." Here, surely, was history, here was the past I wanted, beautifully connected with our present. Frazer was wholly a man of the nineteenth century, and the more so because the eighteenth century was so congenial to him—the lecture of 1933 in which he predicted the Nazi defeat had as its subject Condorcet's *Progress of the Human Mind;* when he took time from his anthropological studies to deal with literature, he prepared editions of Addison's essays and Cowper's letters. He had the old lost belief in the virtue and power of rationality. He loved and counted on order, decorum, and good sense. This great historian of the primitive imagination was in the dominant intellectual tradition of the West that, since the days of the pre-Socratics, has condemned the ways of thought that we call primitive.

In short, Frazer—at least in his first or conscious intention —was a perfect representative of what Matthew Arnold meant by a modern age. And perhaps nothing could make clearer how the conditions of life and literature have changed in a hundred years than to note the difference between the way in which Arnold defines the modern element in literature and the way in which we must define it.

If we speak of modernity, we should have it in mind that the terms of the endowment of the Poetry Chair at Oxford required that the Professor lecture on the ancient literatures and that he speak in Latin. This will suggest that Arnold's making the idea of modernity the subject of his inaugural was not without its subversiveness. Arnold met the requirement of dealing with the classic writers—his lecture is about the modern element in the ancient literatures. But he asked for permission to lecture in English, not because he was unable to speak in Latin but because he wished to be understood by more than scholars. Per-

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mission was granted by the University, with what reluctance I do not know, or with what sad sense that another bastion of the past had fallen, and in an English which was perhaps doctoral but certainly lucid, Arnold undertook to define what he called the modern element.

Arnold used the word modern in a wholly honorific sense. So much so, indeed, that he seems to dismiss all temporal idea from the word and makes it signify certain timeless intellectual and civil virtues. A society, he said, is a modern society when it maintains a condition of repose, confidence, free activity of the mind, and the tolerance of divergent views. A society is modern when it affords sufficient material well-being for the conveniences of life and the development of taste. And, finally, a society is modern when its members are intellectually mature, by which Arnold means that they are willing to judge by reason, to observe facts in a critical spirit, and to search for the law of things. By this definition Periclean Athens is for Arnold a modern age, Elizabethan England is not; Thucydides is a modern historian, Sir Walter Raleigh is not.

I shall not go into further details of Arnold's definition or description of the modern.[2] I have said enough, I think, to suggest what Arnold was up to, what he wanted to see realized as the desideratum of his own society, what ideal he wanted the works of intellect and imagination of his own time to advance. And at what a distance his ideal of the modern puts him from our present sense of modernity, from our modern literature! To anyone conditioned by our modern literature Arnold's ideal

2. I leave out of my summary account the two supreme virtues that Arnold ascribes to the most successful examples of a "modern" literature. One is the power of effecting an "intellectual deliverance," by which Arnold means leading men to comprehend the "vast multitude of facts" which make up "a copious and complex present, and behind it a copious and complex past." The other is "adequacy," the ability to represent the complex high human development of a modern age "in its completest and most harmonious" aspect, doing so with "the charm of that noble serenity which always accompanies true insight."

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of order, convenience, decorum, and rationality might well seem to reduce itself to the small advantages and excessive limitations of the middle-class life of a few prosperous nations of the nineteenth century. Arnold's historic sense presented to his mind the long, bitter, bloody past of Europe, and he seized passionately upon the hope of true civilization at last achieved. But the historic sense of our literature has in mind a long excess of civilization to which it ascribes the bitterness and blood of both the past and of the present and of which it conceives the peaceful aspects to be mainly contemptible—its order achieved at the cost of extravagant personal repression, either that of coercion or that of acquiescence; its repose otiose; its tolerance either flaccid or capricious; its material comfort corrupt and corrupting; its taste a manifestation either of timidity or of pride; its rationality attained only at the price of energy and passion.

For the understanding of this radical change of opinion nothing is more illuminating than to be aware of the doubleness of mind of the author of *The Golden Bough*. I have said that Frazer in his conscious mind and in his first intention exemplifies all that Arnold means by the modern. He often speaks quite harshly of the irrationality and the orgiastic excesses of the primitive religions he describes, and even Christianity comes under his criticism both because it stands in the way of rational thought and because it can draw men away from intelligent participation in the life of society. But Frazer had more than one intention, and he had an unconscious as well as a conscious mind. If he deplores the primitive imagination, he does not fail to show it as also wonderful and beautiful. It is the rare reader of *The Golden Bough* who finds the ancient beliefs and rituals wholly alien to him. It is to be expected that Frazer's adduction of the many pagan analogues to the Christian mythos will be thought by Christian readers to have an adverse effect on faith, it was undoubtedly Frazer's purpose that it should, yet many readers will feel that Frazer makes all faith and ritual indigenous to humanity, virtually biological; they feel, as DeQuincey put it, that not

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to be at least a *little* superstitious is to lack generosity of mind. Scientific though his purpose was, Frazer had the effect of validating and even of seeming to propose to modern times those old modes of experiencing the world which, beginning with the Romanticists, modern men have sought to revive in order to escape from positivism and common sense.

The direction of the imagination upon great and mysterious objects of worship is not the only means men use to liberate themselves from the bondage of quotidian fact, and although Frazer can scarcely be held accountable for the ever-growing modern attraction to the extreme mental states, to rapture, ecstasy, and transcendance, which are achieved by drugs, trance, music and dance, orgy, and derangement of personality, yet he did provide a bridge to the understanding and acceptance of these states, he proposed to us the idea that the desire for them and the use of them for heuristic purposes is a common and acceptable manifestation of human nature.

This one element of Frazer's masterpiece could scarcely fail to suggest the next of my prolegomenal works. It is worth remarking that its author is in his own way as great a classical scholar as Frazer himself—Nietzsche was the Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basel when, at the age of 27, he published his essay, *The Birth of Tragedy*. After the appearance of this stunningly brilliant account of Greek civilization, of which Socrates is not the hero but the villain, what can possibly be left to us of that rational and ordered Greece, that modern, that eighteenth-century, Athens that Arnold so entirely relied on as the standard for judging all civilizations? Professor Kaufmann is right when he warns us against supposing that Nietzsche exalts Dionysus over Apollo and tells us that Nietzsche "emphasizes the Dionysiac only because he feels that the Apollonian genius of the Greeks cannot be fully understood apart from it." But no one reading Nietzsche's essay for the first time is likely to heed this warning. What will reach him before due caution intervenes, before he becomes aware of the portentous dialectic

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between Dionysus and Apollo, is the excitement of his sudden liberation from Aristotle, the joy that he takes in his willingness to believe the author's statement that, "art rather than ethics constitutes the essential metaphysical activity of man," that tragedy has its source in the Dionysiac rapture, "whose closest analogy is furnished by physical intoxication," and that this rapture, in which "the individual forgets himself completely," was in itself no metaphysical state but an orgiastic display of lust and cruelty, "of sexual promiscuity overriding every form of tribal law." This sadic and masochistic frenzy, Nietzsche is at pains to insist, needs the taming hand of Apollo before it can become tragedy, but it is the primal stuff of the great art, and to the modern experience of tragedy this explanation of it seems far more pertinent than Aristotle's, with its eagerness to forget its origin in its achievement of a noble *apatheia*.

Of supreme importance in itself, Nietzsche's essay had for me the added pedagogic advantage of allowing me to establish an historical line back to William Blake. Nothing is more characteristic of modern literature than its discovery and canonization of the primal, non-ethical energies, and the historical point could be made the better by remarking the correspondence of thought of two men of different nations and separated from each other by a good many decades, for Nietzsche's Dionysus and Blake's Hell are much the same thing.

Whether or not Joseph Conrad read either Blake or Nietzsche I do not know, but his *Heart of Darkness* follows in their line. This very great work has never lacked for the admiration it deserves, and it has been given a kind of canonical place in the legend of modern literature by Eliot's having it so clearly in mind when he wrote *The Waste Land* and his having taken from it the epigraph to "The Hollow Men." But no one, to my knowledge, has ever confronted in an explicit way its strange and terrible message of ambivalence toward the life of civilization. Consider that its protagonist Kurtz is a progressive and a liberal and that he is the highly respected representative of a

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society which undertakes to represent itself as benign, although in fact it is vicious. Consider too that he is a practitioner of several arts, a painter, a writer, a musician, and into the bargain a political orator. He is at once the most idealistic and the most practically successful of all the agents of the Belgian exploitation of the Congo. Everybody knows what truth about him Marlow discovers—that Kurtz's success is the result of a terrible ascendancy he has gained over the natives of his distant station, an ascendancy which is derived from his presumed magical or divine powers, that he has exercised his rule with the extreme of cruelty, that he has given himself to unnamable acts of lust. This is the world of the darker pages of *The Golden Bough*. It is one of the great points of Conrad's story that Marlow speaks of the primitive life of the jungle not as being noble or charming or even free but as being base and sordid—and for *that* reason compelling: he himself feels quite overtly its dreadful attraction. It is to this devilish baseness that Kurtz has yielded himself, and yet Marlow, although he does indeed treat him with hostile irony, does not find it possible to suppose that Kurtz is anything but a hero of the spirit. For me it is still ambiguous whether Kurtz's famous deathbed cry, "The horror! The horror!" refers to the approach of death or to his experience of savage life. Whichever it is, to Marlow the fact that Kurtz could utter this cry at the point of death, while Marlow himself, when death threatens him, can know it only as a weary greyness, marks the difference between the ordinary man and a hero of the spirit. Is this not the essence of the modern belief about the nature of the artist, the man who goes down into that hell which is the historical beginning of the human soul, a beginning not outgrown but established in humanity as we know it now, preferring the reality of this hell to the bland lies of the civilization that has overlaid it?

This idea is proposed again in the somewhat less powerful but still very moving work with which I followed *Heart of Darkness,* Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. I wanted this story not so much for its account of an extravagantly Apollonian personal-

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ity surrendering to forces that, in his Apollonian character, he thought shameful—although this was certainly to my purpose—but rather for Aschenbach's fevered dreams of the erotic past, and in particular that dream of the goat-orgy which Mann, being the kind of writer he is, having the kind of relation to Nietzsche he had, might well have written to serve as an illustration of what *The Birth of Tragedy* means by religious frenzy, the more so, of course, because Mann chooses that particular orgiastic ritual, the killing and eating of the goat, from which tragedy is traditionally said to have been derived. A notable element of this story in which the birth of tragedy plays an important part is that the degradation and downfall of the protagonist is not represented as tragic in the usual sense of the word—that is, it is not represented as a great deplorable event. It is a commonplace of modern literary thought that the tragic mode is not available even to the gravest and noblest of our writers. I am not sure that this is the deprivation that some people think it to be and a mark of our spiritual inferiority. But if we ask why it has come about, one reason may be that we have learned to think our way back through tragedy to the primal stuff out of which tragedy arose. If we consider the primitive forbidden ways of conduct which traditionally in tragedy lead to punishment by death, we think of them as being the path to reality and truth, to an ultimate self-realization. We have always wondered if tragedy itself may not have been saying just this in a deeply hidden way, drawing us to think of the hero's sin and death as somehow conferring justification, even salvation of a sort—no doubt this is what Nietzsche had in mind when he said that "tragedy denies ethics." What tragedy once seemed to hint, our literature now is willing to say quite explicitly. If Mann's Aschenbach dies at the height of his intellectual and artistic powers, at the behest of a passion that his ethical reason condemns, we do not take this to be a defeat, rather a kind of terrible rebirth: at his latter end the artist knows a reality that he had until now refused to admit to consciousness.

This being so, how fortunate that the Anchor edition of

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The Birth of Tragedy should include Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*. For here, among many other ideas most pertinent to the *mystique* of modern literature, was the view of society which is consonant with the belief that art and not ethics constitutes the essential metaphysical activity of man and with the validation and ratification of the primitive energies. Nietzsche's theory of the social order dismisses all ethical impulse from its origins—the basis of society is to be found in the rationalization of cruelty: as simple as that. Nietzsche has no ultimate Utopian intention in saying this, no hope of revising the essence of the social order, although he does believe that its pain can be mitigated. He represents cruelty as a social necessity, for only by its exercise could men ever have been induced to develop a continuity of will: nothing else than cruelty could have created in mankind that memory of intention which makes society possible. The method of cynicism which Nietzsche pursued—let us be clear that it is a method and not an attitude—goes so far as to describe punishment in terms of the pleasure derived from the exercise of cruelty: "Compensation," he says, "consists in a legal warrant entitling one man to exercise his cruelty on another." There follows that most remarkable passage in which Nietzsche describes the process whereby the individual turns the cruelty of punishment against himself and creates the bad conscience and the consciousness of guilt which manifests itself as a pervasive anxiety. Nietzsche's complexity of mind is beyond all comparison, for in this book which is dedicated to the liberation of the conscience, Nietzsche makes his defense of the bad conscience as a decisive force in the interests of culture. It is much the same line of argument that he takes when, having attacked the Jewish morality and the priestly existence in the name of the health of the spirit, he reminds us that only by his sickness does man become interesting.

From *The Genealogy of Morals* to Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* is but a step, and some might think that, for pedagogic purposes, the step is so small as to make the second book

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supererogatory. But although Freud's view of society and culture has indeed a very close affinity to Nietzsche's, Freud does add certain considerations which are essential to our sense of the modern disposition.

For one thing, he puts to us the question of whether or not we want to *accept* civilization. It is not the first time that the paradox of civilization has been present to the mind of civilized people, the sense that civilization makes men behave worse and suffer more than does some less developed state of human existence. But hitherto all such ideas were formulated in a moralizing way—civilization was represented as being "corrupt," a divagation from a state of innocence. Freud had no illusions about a primitive innocence, he conceived no practicable alternative to civilization. In consequence there was a unique force to the question he asked: whether we wished to accept civilization, with all its contradictions, with all its pains—pains, for "discontents" does not accurately describe what Freud has in mind. He had his own answer to the question—his tragic, or stoic, sense of life dictated it: we do well to accept it, although we also do well to cast a cold eye on the fate that makes it our better part to accept it. Like Nietzsche, Freud thought that life was justified by our heroic response to its challenge.

But the question Freud posed has not been set aside or closed up by the answer that he himself gave to it. His answer, like Nietzsche's, is essentially in the line of traditional humanism —we can see this in the sternness with which he charges women not to interfere with men in the discharge of their cultural duty, not to claim men for love and the family to the detriment of their free activity in the world. But just here lies the matter of Freud's question that the world more and more believes Freud himself did not answer. The pain that civilization inflicts is that of the instinctual renunciation that civilization demands, and it would seem that fewer and fewer people wish to say with Freud that the loss of instinctual gratification, emotional freedom, or love, are compensated for either by the security of civilized life

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or the stern pleasures of the moral masculine character. The possibility of options different from the one that Freud made is proposed theoretically by two recent books, Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death.*

With Freud's essay I brought to a close my list of prolegomenal books for the first term of the course. I shall not do much more than mention the books with which I introduced the second term, but I should like to do at least that. I began with *Rameau's Nephew,* thinking that the peculiar moral authority which Diderot assigns to the envious, untalented unregenerate protagonist was peculiarly relevant to the line taken by the ethical explorations of modern literature. Nothing is more characteristic of the literature of our time than the replacement of the hero by what has come to be called the anti-hero, in whose indifference to or hatred of ethical nobility there is presumed to lie a special authenticity. Diderot is quite overt about this—he himself in his public character is the deuteroganist, the "honest consciousness," as Hegel calls him, and he takes delight in the discomfiture of the decent, dull person he is by the Nephew's nihilistic mind.

It seemed to me too that there was particular usefulness in the circumstance that this anti-hero should avow so openly his *envy,* which Tocqueville has called the ruling emotion of democracy, and that, although he envied anyone at all who had access to the creature-comforts and the social status which he lacked, what chiefly animated him was envy of men of genius. Ours is the first cultural epoch in which many men aspire to high achievement in the arts and, in their frustration, form a dispossessed class which cuts across the conventional class lines, making a proletariat of the spirit.

Although *Rameau's Nephew* was not published until fairly late in the century, it was known in manuscript by Goethe and Hegel; it suited the temper and won the admiration of Marx and Freud for reasons that are obvious. And there is ground for supposing that it was known to Dostoevsky, whose *Notes from*

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Underground is a restatement of the essential idea of Diderot's dialogue in terms both more extreme and less genial. The Nephew is still on the defensive—he is naughtily telling secrets about the nature of man and society. But Dostoevsky's underground man shouts aloud his envy and hatred and carries the ark of his self-hatred and alienation into a remorseless battle with what he calls "the good and the beautiful," mounting an attack upon every belief not merely of bourgeois society but of the whole humanist tradition. The inclusion of *Notes from Underground* among my prolegomenal books constituted something of a pedagogic risk, for if I wished to emphasize the subversive tendency of modern literature, here was a work which made all subsequent subversion seem like affirmation, so radical and so brilliant was its negation of our pieties and assumptions.

I hesitated in compunction before following *Notes from Underground* with Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilytch,* which so ruthlessly and with such dreadful force destroys the citadel of the commonplace life in which we all believe we can take refuge from ourselves and our fate. But I did assign it and then two of Pirandello's plays which, in the atmosphere of the sordidness of the commonplace life, undermine all the certitudes of the commonplace, common-sense mind.

From time to time I have raised with myself the question of whether my choice of these prolegomenal works was not extravagant, quite excessively tendentious. I have never been able to believe that it is. And if these works do indeed serve to indicate in an accurate way the nature of modern literature, a teacher might find it worth asking how his students respond to the strong dose.

One response I have already described—the readiness of the students to engage in the process that we might call the socialization of the anti-social, or the acculturation of the anti-cultural, or the legitimization of the subversive. When the term-essays come in, it is plain to me that almost none of the students have been taken aback by what they have read: they have

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wholly contained the attack. The chief exceptions are the few who simply do not comprehend, although they may be awed by, the categories of our discourse. In their papers, like poor hunted creatures in a Kafka story, they take refuge first in misunderstood large phrases, then in bad grammar, then in general incoherence. After my pedagogical exasperation has run its course, I find that I am sometimes moved to give them a queer respect, as if they had stood up and said what in fact they don't have the wit to stand up and say: "Why do you harry us? Leave us alone. We are not Modern Man. We are the Old People. Ours is the Old Faith. We serve the little Old Gods, the gods of the copybook maxims, the small, dark, somewhat powerful deities of lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants. With them is neither sensibility nor *angst*. With them is no disgust—it is they, indeed, who make ready the way for 'the good and the beautiful' about which low-minded doubts have been raised in this course, that 'good and beautiful' which we do not possess and don't want to possess but which we know justifies our lives. Leave us alone and let us worship our gods in the way they approve, in peace and unawareness." Crass, but—to use that interesting modern word which we have learned from the curators of museums—authentic. The rest, the minds that give me the A papers and the B papers and even the C+ papers, move through the terrors and mysteries of modern literature like so many Parsifals, asking no questions at the behest of wonder and fear. Or like so many seminarists who have been systematically instructed in the constitution of Hell and the ways to damnation. Or like so many *readers,* entertained by moral horror stories. I asked them to look into the Abyss, and, both dutifully and gladly, they have looked into the Abyss, and the Abyss has greeted them with the grave courtesy of all objects of serious study, saying: "Interesting, am I not? And *exciting,* if you consider how deep I am and what dread beasts lie at my bottom. Have it well in mind that a knowledge of me contributes materially to your being whole, or well-rounded, men."

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In my distress over the outrage I have conspired to perpetrate upon a great literature, I wonder if perhaps I have not been reading these papers too literally. After all, a term-essay is not a diary of the soul, it is not an occasion for telling the truth. What my students might reveal of their true feelings to a younger teacher they will not reveal to me; they will give me what they conceive to be the proper response to the official version of terror I have given them. I bring to mind their faces, which are not necessarily the faces of the authors of these unperturbed papers, nor are they, not yet, the faces of fathers of families, or of theater-goers, or of buyers of Modern Paintings: not yet. I must think it possible that in ways and to a degree which they keep secret they have responded directly and personally to what they have read.

And if they have? And if they have, am I the more content?

What form would I want their response to take? It is a teacher's question that I am asking, not a critic's. We have decided in recent years to think of the critic and the teacher of literature as one and the same, and no doubt it is both possible and useful to do so. But there are some points at which the functions of the two do not coincide, or can be made to coincide only with great difficulty. Of criticism we have been told, by Arnold, that "it must be apt to study and praise elements that for fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent." But teaching, or at least undergraduate teaching, is not given the same licensed mandate—cannot be given it because the teacher's audience, which stands before his very eyes, as the critic's audience does not, asks questions about "the practical sphere," as the critic's audience does not. For instance, on the very day that I write this, when I had said to my class all I could think of to say about *The Magic Mountain* and invited questions and comments, one student asked, "How would you generalize the idea of the educative value of illness, so that it would be applicable not only to a particular individual, Hans Castorp, but to young

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people at large?" It makes us smile, but it was asked in all seriousness, and it is serious in its substance, and it had to be answered seriously, in part by the reflection that this idea, like so many ideas encountered in the books of the course had to be thought of as having reference only to the private life; that it touched the public life only in some indirect or tangential way; that it really ought to be encountered in solitude, even in secrecy, since to talk about it in public and in our academic setting was to seem to propose for it a public practicality and thus to distort its meaning. To this another student replied; he said that, despite the public ritual of the classroom, each student inevitably experienced the books in privacy and found their meaning in reference to his own life. True enough, but the teacher sees the several privacies coming together to make a group, and they propose—no doubt the more because they come together every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at a particular hour—the idea of a community, that is to say, "the practical sphere."

This being so, the teacher cannot escape the awareness of certain circumstances which the critic, who writes for an ideal, uncircumstanced reader, has no need to take into account. The teacher considers, for example, the social situation of his students —they are not of patrician origin, they do not come from homes in which stubbornness, pride, and conscious habit prevail, nor are they born into a culture marked by these traits, a culture in which other interesting and valuable things compete with and resist ideas; they come, mostly, from "good homes" in which authority and valuation are weak or at least not very salient and bold, so that ideas have for them, at their present stage of development, a peculiar power and preciousness. And in this connection the teacher will have in mind the peculiar prestige that our culture, in its upper reaches, gives to art, and to the ideas that art proposes—the agreement, ever growing in assertiveness, that art yields more truth than any other intellectual activity. In this culture what a shock it is to encounter Santayana's acerb skepticism about art, or Keats's remark, which the critics and

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scholars never take notice of, presumably because they suppose it to be an aberration, "This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth." For many students no ideas that they will encounter in any college discipline will equal in force and sanction the ideas conveyed to them by modern literature.

The author of *The Magic Mountain* once said that all his work could be understood as an effort to free himself from the middle class, and this, of course, will serve to describe the chief intention of all modern literature. And the means of freedom which Mann prescribes (the characteristic irony notwithstanding) is the means of freedom which in effect all of modern literature prescribes. It is, in the words of Clavdia Chauchat, *"se perdre et même . . . se laisser dépérir,"* and thus to name the means is to make plain that the end is not merely freedom from the middle class but freedom from society itself. I venture to say that the idea of losing oneself up to the point of self-destruction, of surrendering oneself to experience without regard to self-interest or conventional morality, of escaping wholly from the societal bonds, is an "element" somewhere in the mind of every modern person who dares to think of what Arnold in his unaffected Victorian way called "the fulness of spiritual perfection." But the teacher who undertakes to present modern literature to his students may not allow that idea to remain in the *somewhere* of his mind; he must take it from the place where it exists habitual and unrealized and put it in the conscious forefront of his thought. And if he is committed to an admiration of modern literature, he must also be committed to this chief idea of modern literature. I press the logic of the situation not in order to question the legitimacy of the commitment, or even the propriety of expressing the commitment in the college classroom (although it does seem odd!) but to confront those of us who do teach modern literature with the striking actuality of our enterprise.

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Robert Lowell

FOUR SPEECHES FROM RACINE'S "PHÈDRE"

ON TRANSLATING PHÈDRE

Racine's plays are generally and correctly thought to be untranslatable. His syllabic alexandrines do not and cannot exist in English. We cannot reproduce his language, which is refined by the literary artifice of his contemporaries, and given a subtle realism and grandeur by the spoken idiom of Louis the Fourteenth's court. Behind each line is a, for us, lost knowledge of actors and actresses, the stage and the moment. Other qualities remain: the great conception, the tireless plotting, and perhaps the genius for rhetoric and versification that alone proves that the conception and plotting are honest. Matisse says somewhere that a reproduction requires as much talent for color as the original painting. I have been tormented by the fraudulence of my own heavy touch.

My meter, with important differences, is based on Dryden and Pope. In his heroic plays, Dryden uses an end-stopped couplet, loaded with inversions, heavily alliterated, and varied by short unrhymed lines. My couplet is run on, avoids inversions and alliteration, and loosens its rhythm with shifted accents and occasional extra syllables. I gain in naturalness and lose in compactness and epigrammic resonance. I have tried for an idiomatic and ageless style, but I inevitably echo the English Restoration, both in ways that are proper and in my sometimes un-Racinian humor and bombast.

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My version is free; *nevertheless I have used every speech in the original, and indeed every line is either translated or paraphrased. Racine is said to have written prose drafts and then versed them. We do not have the prose drafts, but I feel sure that necessities of line rhyme, etc. made for changes of phrasing and even of meaning. In versing Racine, I have taken the same liberty. Here and there, I have put in things that no French classical author would have used. Such interpolations are rare, however.*

No translator has had the gifts or the luck to bring Racine into our culture. It's a pity that Pope and Dryden overlooked Racine's great body of works, close to them, in favor of the inaccessible Homer and Virgil.

Racine's verse has a diamond-edge. He is perhaps the greatest poet in the French language, but he uses a smaller vocabulary than any English poet—beside him Pope and Bridges have a Shakespearean luxuriance. He has few verbally inspired lines, and in this is unlike Baudelaire and even Fontaine. His poetry is great because of the justness of its rhythm and logic, and the glory of its hard, electric rage. I have translated as a poet, and tried to give my lines a certain dignity, speed, and flare.

R. L.

BACKGROUND OF THE ACTION

The story of Racine's *Phèdre* is a Greek myth. Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, the hero and king of Athens, is the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, the rulers of Crete. Pasiphaë coupled with a bull, and bore the Minotaur, half bull and half man, who was slain by Theseus in the maze at Crete. Phaedra falls madly in love with her stepson, Hippolytus. She is rejected by him, and falsely accuses him of trying to assault her. Theseus prays to Poseidon, the sea-god, to destroy Hippolytus; Hippolytus is destroyed. Phaedra confesses and kills herself. *Phèdre* is in some ways a miraculous translation and adaptation of Euripedes' *Hippolytos*. Racine quite alters, and to my mind even surpasses, his wonderful original.

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I

PHAEDRA: My evil comes from farther off. In May,
in brilliant Athens, on my marriage day,
I turned aside for shelter from the smile
of Theseus. Death was frowning in an aisle—
Hippolytus! I saw his face, turned white!
My lost and dazzled eyes saw only night,
capricious burnings flickered through my bleak
abandoned flesh. I could not breathe or speak.
I faced my flaming executioner,
Aphrodite, my mother's murderer!
I tried to stop her wrath by flowers and praise,
I built her a temple, fretted months and days
on decoration. I even hoped to find
symbols and stays for my distracted mind,
searching the guts of sacrificial steers.
Yet when my erring passions, mutineers
to virtue, offered incense at the shrine
of love, I failed to silence the malign
Goddess. Alas, my hungry open mouth,
thirsting with adoration, tasted drouth—
Venus resigned her altar to my new lord—
and even while I was praying, I adored
Hippolytus above the sacred flame,
now offered to his name I could not name.
I fled him, yet he stormed me in disguise,
and seemed to watch me from his father's eyes.
I even turned against myself, screwed up
my slack courage to fury, and would not stop
shrieking and raging, till half-dead with love
and the hatred of a stepmother, I drove
Hippolytus in exile from the rest
and strenuous wardship of his father's breast.
Then I could breathe, Oenone; he was gone;
my lazy, nerveless days meandered on

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through dreams and daydreams, like a stately carriage
touring the level landscape of my marriage.
Yet nothing worked. My husband sent me here
to Troezen, far from Athens; once again the dear
face shattered me; I saw Hippolytus
each day, and felt the ancient, venomous
yearnings burn my heartstrings—no secret fire,
but Venus clawing down her prey—entire,
unveiled, enraged. Each moment, terrified
by loose incessant passions, now I cried
for death to save my glory and expel
my gloomy frenzy from this world, my hell.
And yet your tears and words bewildered me,
and so endangered my tranquillity,
at last I spoke. Nurse, I shall not repent,
if you will leave me the passive content
of dry silence and solitude, the choice
of dying unenlightened by your voice.[1]

II

PHAEDRA: I hunger for Theseus. Always in my eye
he wanders, not as he appeared in hell,
lascivious eulogist of any belle
he found there, from the lowest to the Queen;
no, faithful, airy, just a little mean
through virtue, charming all, yet young and new,
such as they paint the gods—a man like you.
Your valiant shyness would have graced his speech,
he would have had your stature, eyes, and reach,
Prince, when he flashed across our Cretan waters,
the loved enslaver of King Minos' daughters.
when your just vengeance thundered through its skull.
of Athens' youth against my father's power,

1. From Act I, Scene 3.

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and ignore you? You were too young, they say;
you should have voyaged as a stowaway.
No dawdling bypath would have saved our bull,
when your just vengeance thundered through its skull.
There, light of foot, and certain of your goal,
you would have struck my brother's monstrous soul,
and pierced our maze's slow meanders, led
by Ariadne and her faithful thread.
By Ariadne? Prince, *I* would have fought
for precedence; my every flaming thought,
love-quickened, would have shot you through the dark,
straight as an arrow to your quaking mark.
Could I have waited, panting, perishing,
entrusting your survival to a string,
like Ariadne, when she skulked behind,
there at the portal, to bemuse her mind
among the solemn cloisters of the porch?
No, Phaedra would have snatched your burning torch.
and lunged before you, reeling like a priest
of Dionysus to distract the beast.
I would have reached the final corridor
a lap before you, and killed the Minotaur!
Lost in the labyrinth, and at your side,
would it have mattered, if I lived or died?

HIPPOLYTUS: What are you saying, Madam? You forget
my father is your husband!

PHAEDRA: I have let
you see my grief for Theseus! How could I
forget my honor and my majesty,
Prince?

HIPPOLYTUS: Madam, forgive me! My foolish youth
conjectured hideous untruths from your truth
I cannot face my insolence. Farewell . . .

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PHAEDRA: You monster! You understood me too well!
Why do you hang there, speechless petrified,
polite! My mind whirls. What have I to hide?
Phaedra in all her madness stands before you.
I love you! Fool, I love you, I adore you!
Do not imagine that my mind approved
my first defection, Prince, or that I loved
your youth light-heartedly, and fed my treason
with cowardly compliance, till I lost my reason.
Suppose I even wanted to destroy
my lawful husband, would I choose a boy,
his son, to die for? Prince, the gods corrupt
us; though I never suffered their abrupt
seductions, shattering advances, I
too bear their sensual lightnings in my thigh.
I too am dying. I have felt the heat
that drove my mother through the fields of Crete
the bride of Minos, dying for the full
magnetic April thunders of the bull.
I struggled with my sickness, but I found
no grace or magic to preserve my sound
intelligence and honor from this lust,
plowing my body with its horny thrust.
At first I fled you, and when this fell short
of safety, Prince, I exiled you from court.
Alas, my violence to resist you made
my face inhuman, hateful. I was afraid
to kiss my husband lest I love his son.
I made you fear me (this was easily done);
you loathed me more, I ached for you no less.
Misfortune magnified your loveliness.
I grew so wrung and wasted, men mistook
me for the Sibyl. If you could bear to look
your eyes would tell you. Do you believe my passion
is voluntary? That my obscene confession

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is some trick, some oily strategem?
I came here to beg you not to condemn
my son, already uncertain of his life.
Ridiculous, mad embassy, for a wife
who loves her stepson! Prince, I only spoke
about myself! Avenge yourself, invoke
your father; a worse monster threatens you
than any Theseus ever fought and slew.
The wife of Theseus loves Hippolytus!
Come on, Prince! Look, this monster, ravenous
for her execution, will not flinch.
I want your sword's spasmodic final inch.
I want death! Wait, you fear my blood will foul
your virgin flesh. If you begrudge my soul
this glorious annihilation at your hand,
unbuckle, drop your sword. Prince, I command
you, I entrust you with my fate!
Oh let me kill myself and expiate
my love for you and perish, while your sword
severs me from this body I abhorred![2]

III

PHAEDRA: Nurse, the last calamity
has come. This is the bottom of the sea.
All that preceded this had little force—
the flames of lust, the horrors of remorse,
the prim refusal by my grim young master,
were only feeble hints of this disaster.
They love each other! Passion blinded me.
I let them blind me, let them meet and see
each other freely! Was such bounty wrong?
Oenone, you have known this all along,

2. From Act II, Scene 5.

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you must have seen their meetings, watched them sneak
off to their forest, playing hide-and-seek!
Alas, such rendezvous are no offense:
innocent nature smiles on innocence,
for them each natural impulse was allowed,
each day was summer and without a cloud.
Oenone, nature hated me. I fled
its light, as if a price were on my head.
I masked my grace and hungered for my end.
Death was the only God my vows could bend.
And even while my desolation served
me gall and tears, I knew I was observed;
I never had security or leisure
for honest weeping, but must steal this pleasure.
Oh hideous pomp; a monarch only wears
the robes of majesty to hide her tears!

OENONE: How can their folly help them? They will never enjoy its fruit.

PHAEDRA: Ugh, they will love forever—
even while I am talking, they embrace,
they taunt me, they are laughing in my face!
In the teeth of exile, I can hear them swear
they will be true forever, everywhere.
Oenone, have pity on my jealous rage;
I'll kill this happiness that jeers at age.
I'll summon Theseus; hate shall answer hate!
I'll drive my husband to annihilate
Aricia—let no trivial punishment,
her instant death, or bloodless banishment . . .
What am I saying? Have I lost my mind?
I am jealous, and call my husband! Bind
me, gag me; I am frothing with desire.
My husband is alive, and I'm on fire!

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For whom? Hippolytus. When I have said
his name, blood fills my eyes, my heart stops dead.
Imposture, incest, murder! I have passed
the limits of damnation; now at last,
my lover's lifeblood is the only well
that cools my homicidal thirst for hell.
Yet I live! I live on, looked down upon
by my progenitor, the sacred sun,
by Zeus, by Europa, by a universe
of gods and stars, my ancestors, who curse
their daughter. Let me perish. In the night
of Hades, I'll find shelter from their sight.
What am I saying? I've no place to turn:
Minos, my father, holds the judge's urn.
The gods have placed damnation in his hands,
the shades in Hades follow his commands.
Will he not shake and curse his fatal star
that brings his daughter trembling to his bar?
His child by Pasiphaë forced to tell
a thousand sins unclassified in hell?
Father, when you interpret what I speak,
I fear your fortitude will be too weak
to hold the urn. I see you fumbling for
new punishments for crimes unknown before.
You'll be your own child's executioner!
You cannot kill me; look, my murderer
is Venus, who destroyed our family;
Father, she has already murdered me.
I killed myself—and what is worse my waste
of life for pleasures I shall never taste.
My lover flees me still, and my last gasp,
alas, is for the flesh I failed to clasp.[3]

3. From Act IV, Scene 6.

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IV

THESEUS: Here is Theramenes. Where is my boy,
my first-born? He was yours to guard and keep.
Where is he? Answer me. What's this? You weep?

THERAMENES: Oh tardy, futile grief, his blood is shed.
My lord, your son, Hippolytus is dead.

THESEUS: Oh, Gods, have mercy!

THERAMENES: I saw him die. The most
lovely and innocent of men is lost.

THESEUS: He's dead! The gods have hurried him away
and killed him, just as I began to pray.
What sudden thunderbolt has struck him down?

THERAMENES: We'd started out, and hardly left the town.
He held the reins; a few feet to his rear,
a single, silent guard held up a spear.
He followed the Mycenae highroad, deep
in thought, reins dangling, as if half asleep;
his famous horses, only he could hold,
trudged on with lowered heads, and sometimes rolled
their dull eyes slowly—they seemed to have caught
their master's melancholy, and aped his thought.
Then all at once winds struck us like a fist,
we heard a sudden roaring through the mist;
from underground a voice in agony
answered the prolonged groaning of the sea.
We shook, the horses' manes rose on their heads,
and now against a sky of blacks and reds,
we saw the flat waves hump into a mountain
of green-white water rising like a fountain,
as it reached land and crashed with a last roar
to shatter like a galley on the shore.

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Out of its fragments rose a monster, half
dragon, half bull; a mouth that seemed to laugh
drooled venom on its dirty yellow scales
and python belly, forking to three tails.
The shore was shaken like a tuning fork,
ships bounced on the stung sea like bits of cork,
the earth moved, and the sun spun round and round,
a sulphur-colored venom swept the ground.
We fled; each felt his dauntless courage falter,
and sought asylum at the nearby altar.
Only the Prince remained; he wheeled about,
and hurled a javelin through the monster's snout.
Both kept advancing. Flung from the Prince's arm,
dart after dart struck where the blood was warm.
The monster in its death-throes felt defeat,
and bounded howling to the horses' feet.
There its stretched gullet and its armor broke,
and drenched the chariot with blood and smoke,
and then the horses, terror-struck, stampeded.
Their master's whip and shouting went unheeded,
they dragged his breathless body to the spray.
Their red mouths bit the bloody surf, men say
Poseidon stood beside them, that a god
was hacking at their bellies with a goad.
Their terror drove them crashing on a cliff,
the chariot crashed in two, they ran as if
the Furies screamed and crackled in their manes,
their fallen hero tangled in the reins,
jounced on the rocks behind them. Oh the light
of heaven never will expunge this sight:
the horses that Hippolytus had tamed,
now dragged him headlong, and their
mad hooves maimed
his face past recognition. When he tried
to call them, calling only terrified;

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faster and ever faster moved their feet,
his body was a piece of bloody meat.
The cliffs and ocean trembled to our shout,
at last the onrush failed, they turned about,
and stopped not far from where those hallowed graves,
the Prince's fathers, overlook the waves.
I ran on breathless, guards were at my back,
my master's blood had left a generous track.
The stones were red, each thistle in the mud
was stuck with bits of hair and skin and blood.
I came upon him, called; he stretched his right
hand to me, blinked his eyes, then closed them tight.
"I die," he whispered, "it's the gods' desire.
Friend, stand between Aricia and my sire—
some day enlightened, softened, disabused,
he will lament his son, falsely accused;
then when at last he wishes to appease
my soul, he'll treat my lover gently, release
and honor Aricia. . . ." On this word, he died.
Only a broken body testified
he'd lived and loved once. On the sand now lies
something his father will not recognize.[4]

4. From Act V, Scene 6.

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Frank Kermode

POET AND DANCER BEFORE DIAGHILEV

Diaghilev is only a terminus; he arrived in Paris in 1909, and everybody knows what happened. *"Le rêve de Mallarmé se réalise,"* said Ghéon. What dream of Mallarmé? That which found a true theatrical sonority, a stage liberated from cardboard falsities, "a logic of the discontinuous," in dancing; which emerged from a confluence of the other arts and yet remained, as Wagner did not, theater. The Ballets Russes demonstrated the correspondence of the arts so wonderfully that in comparison Wagner's effort was, said Camille Mauclair, *"une gaucherie barbare."* Diaghilev arrived, not a moment too soon, in response to prayers from both sides of the Channel. One could trace the developments in taste which prepared his reception—not only in the limited sphere of the dance, but in writings on actors (the cult of Duse, for example), in the fashionable admiration for oriental art and theater, in avant-garde agitation for theatrical reform. In March, 1908, *The Mask*, a quarterly dedicated to this end and strongly under the influence of Gordon Craig, prayed in its opening editorial for a religion that did not "rest upon knowledge nor rely upon the Word," but rather brought together "Music, Architecture, and Movement" to heal "the Evil . . . which has separated these three Arts and which leaves the world without a belief." The editor can hardly have expected his prayers to be answered so soon—not precisely by the theatrical reforms he had in mind, but by the Russian dancers, prophets of that concord and renaissance he so earnestly requested. Havelock Ellis, with his usual wide view, put the

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situation thus in *The Dance of Life* (1923): "If it is significant that Descartes appeared a few years after the death of Malherbe, it is equally significant that Einstein was immediately preceded by the Russian Ballet."

Ellis makes Diaghilev a John the Baptist of a "classico-mathematical Renaissance," and the notion that this was a renaissance of some kind or other was evidently in the air. However, such credit as is due to its heralds should not all be awarded to the Russian ballet. There was, obviously, Isadora Duncan; she was powerfully associated with poetry and specifically with Symbolist poetry (she married Yesenin and was called a "Symbolist dancer") as well as with Gordon Craig; and she was the mother of Modern Dance, a movement which has produced an enormous quantity of theory, mostly of a sort that makes it congenial to Mrs. Langer. But Isadora doesn't take us to the root of the matter. Where, for my purposes, that lies, I can perhaps suggest in this way: what Camille Mauclair said of Diaghilev was somewhat disloyally said, for he had used almost the same words years before of the American dancer Loïe Fuller. Art, he declared, was one homogeneous essence lying at the root of the diversified arts, not a fusion of them; and Loïe Fuller was it, "a spectacle . . . which defies all definition. . . . Art, nameless, radiant . . . a homogeneous and complete place . . . indefinable, absolute . . . a fire above all dogmas." The language is Mallarméan; as we shall see, it was all but impossible to write of Loïe Fuller otherwise, unless you were very naive. Still, not even Mallarmé could start a renaissance single-handed, and there has to be a word or two here about whatever it was that predisposed everybody to get excited in this particular way about dancers.

The peculiar prestige of dancing over the past seventy or eighty years has, I think, much to do with the notion that it somehow represents art in an undissociated and unspecialized form—a notion made explicit by Yeats and hinted at by Valéry in his remark, "If Aesthetic could materialise, the arts would vanish before her." The notion is essentially primitivist; it de-

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pends upon the assumption that mind and body, form and matter, image and discourse have undergone a process of dissociation, which it is the business of art momentarily to mend. Consequently dancing is credited with a sacred priority over the other arts, as by Havelock Ellis (whose essay is valuable as a summary of the theoretical development I am now discussing) and, with less rhapsody and more philosophy, by Mrs. Langer in the twelfth chapter of *Feeling and Form* and (more flatly) in the opening essay of *Problems of Art*. In view of this primitivizing, it is worth remembering that the increase of prestige was contemporaneous with a major effort by anthropologists, liturgiologists, and folklorists to discover the roots of the dance in ritual of all kinds, and also with the development of a certain medical interest in dancing. The generation of Valéry and that of Eliot took a keen interest in these matters; and from Eliot, at the time when he was busy with Jane Harrison and Frazer, we can get some notion of how they struck the literary imagination. Here, for instance, is a passage from an uncollected *Criterion* review of two books on dancing:

> Anyone who would contribute to our imagination of what the ballet may perform in future . . . should begin by a close study of dancing among primitive peoples. . . . He should also have studied the evolution of Christian and other liturgy. For is not the High Mass—as performed, for instance, at the Madeleine in Paris—one of the highest developments of dancing? And finally, he should track down the secrets of rhythm in the still undeveloped science of neurology.

Mr. Eliot also found the Noh plays exciting and praised Massine for providing in the ignorant modern theater that rhythm regarded as essential by Aristotle.

It is now common ground, I suppose, that Mr. Eliot's criticism, even in this famous early period, is not particularly original in substance, and what he says here had often been said before.

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Only the reference to Aristotle is unconventional; because dancing in Aristotle is a mimetic art. It would be difficult to say at what point the mimetic theory dropped away. One supposes that the dances of ancient Mystery cults were less mimetic than ecstatic. Renaissance dance-theory has its mysterious side. But the peculiar modern view could hardly have been developed before dancing became an accredited fine art; and the date for this seems to be 1746, when Batteux included it among the five with music, poetry, painting and sculpture. The general and developing Romantic tendency was to give music preëminence as being non-discursive, "autonomous" as the word now is, referring to nothing outside itself for meaning, as poems would if there were not a basic flaw in their medium, the habit that words have of meaning something in ordinary usage. But some of this prestige was undoubtedly captured by dancing; it is more "natural" and more "primitive" than music, more obviously expressive of what Mrs. Langer calls "patterns of sentience" and "the mythic consciousness." I use this late terminology because it is careful enough to avoid certain radical confusions. The dance, though expressive, is impersonal, like a Symbolist poem that comes off. Deirdre Pridden in her book *The Art of the Dance in French Literature* (1952) finds the proper word to be Ortega y Gasset's "dehumanization"; the dancer *"vide la danse, autant que faire se peut, de son humaine matière."* Something might here be said about organicist theories of expressiveness in Modern Dance, opposed not only to conventional ballet (as Fuller and Duncan and Yeats were) but sometimes even to the use of music as irrelevant to the *Gestalt* of the dance; the source of these theories is Delsarte, but they have been much refined. However, there is no disagreement from the fundamental principle that dance is the most primitive, non-discursive art, offering a pre-scientific image of life, an intuitive truth. Thus it is the emblem of the Romantic image. Dance belongs to a period before the self and the world were divided, and so achieves naturally that "original unity"

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which, according to Barfield for instance, modern poetry can produce only by a great and exhausting effort of fusion.

The Nineties poets wrote endlessly about dancers, welcomed foreign troupes and prepared the way for the serious impact of the Japanese Noh in the next decade.[1] But they also enjoyed the dancers themselves, and regularly fell in love with them. Symons and his friends would meet the Alhambra girls after the show and take them along to the Crown for drink and serious talk; serious not because of what Symons called the "learned fury" of these "maenads of the decadence," but in a humbler way. This was the epoch of the Church and Stage Guild, Stewart Headlam's club for clergy and actors. Headlam believed "in the Mass, the Ballet, and the Single Tax." He wrote a book on ballet technique. But he also believed that the liturgy must not continue to be deprived of dancing; so he labored to make the stage respectable, that the stigma on dancing might be removed. Among the membership, girls from the Empire and Alhambra preponderated. Headlam was not original in his liturgical views, which may have gained currency from Anglo-Catholic propaganda for ceremonies not explicitly forbidden;[2] however, he gives a pretty good idea of what must have been a common enough belief in this passage from an article he contributed to his own *Church Reformer* (October, 1884) in a series on the Catechism:

. . . to take an illustration from the art of dancing, which perhaps more than all other arts is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, ordained by the Word of God himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof; and which has suffered even more than the other arts from

1. It is quite untrue, by the way, that Fenollosa and Pound "introduced" the Noh plays; interest in them is at least as old as this century.
2. Mr. Iain Fletcher tells me that in Sabine Baring-Gould's periodical *The Sacristy* (1871-2) liturgical dancing is discussed together with other matters such as symbolic zoology.

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the utter anti-sacramentalism of British philistia. Your Manichean Protestant, and your superfine rationalist, reject the Dance as worldly, frivolous, sensual, and so forth; and your dull, stupid Sensualist sees legs, and grunts with some satisfaction: but your Sacramentalist knows something worth more than both of these. He knows what perhaps the dancer herself may be partially unconscious of, that we live now by faith and not by sight, and that the poetry of dance is the expression of unseen spiritual grace. 'She all her being flings into the dance.' 'None dare interpret all her limbs express'. These are the words of a genuine sacramentalist. . . .

The poet is T. Gordon Hake. Headlam knew Symons well, and also Yeats and many other Nineties poets and painters. He seems, in his Guild and in writing of this kind, to reflect rather accurately the liturgical, poetic, and music-hall aspects of this *renaissance of dancing*. The *liturgical ingredient* developed luxuriously in the border country of Anglo-Catholicism; witness R. H. Benson's essay, "On the Dance as a Religious Exercise," an account of the Mass as a dramatic dance:

> The Catholic . . . is not ashamed to take his place with the worshippers of Isis and Cybele, with King David, and with the naked Fijean, and to dance with all his might before the Lord.

The antiquarian interest culminated in G. R. S. Mead's *The Sacred Dance of Jesus* (published in *The Quest* in 1910, but long excogitated). This was Havelock Ellis's chief source, and it is a work of great and curious learning, written in a long tradition of attempts to explain Matt. xi. 17, "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced." Mead was most interested in the second-century *Hymn of Jesus,* but he deals with the Fathers and with Medieval church-dancing, with the liturgies of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches, and so forth. I doubt if Mead is taken very seriously by modern historians—he isn't cited in the large bibliography of Backman's *Religious Dances* (1952)—but for a while he mattered a lot. Yeats, for example, went to his lectures. He was by no means the only zealous dance-

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historian of the time. Toulouse-Lautrec, who was not interested in these matters, had an English *savant* thrown out of a dance-hall for plaguing him about antiquity; this could have been Mead but not necessarily. At a time when it was relatively easy for a dancer to acquire a reputation for learning, Loïe Fuller was said on high authority (Anatole France) to be wise in the history of dancing; she took as her prototype Miriam, who, according to Philo, as quoted by Mead, symbolizes perfect sense, as Moses symbolizes perfect mind.

The presence of the *savant* in the *bal* tells us something about the seriousness with which music-hall dancing was taken on both sides of the Channel. From Symons and the Goncourts one knows that it was so; and of course this was a period of close relations between London and Paris. Yvette Guilbert often appeared in London, Marie Lloyd in Paris; it was fashionable to treat them both as very great artists. This cult of the music hall has been persistent; there is a classic expression of it in Mr. Eliot's essay on Marie Lloyd (1923), and it still goes on in a London which has only one or two feeble survivors, constantly threatened with demolition. Nothing distresses some English intellectuals more than the closing of a music hall. This attitude is a weak descendant of a positive avant-garde reaction against commercial theater in the Nineties; failing dance-drama or übermarionettes, there were still Marie Lloyd and Little Tich, defying cultural and social division, freely satirical, speaking with the voice of the belly. You could talk of Yvette Guilbert, who, according to Andre Raffalovitch, sang "the sufferings of those the world calls vile," in the same breath as the Duse.

The Parisian music halls were certainly not short of a similar intellectual *réclame,* and had their place, as part of the metropolitan experience, with all the other amusements devised for an elite that took its pleasures seriously—fine clothes, Japanese prints, neurasthenia. They are as important in the early history of modern art as folk-music and primitive painting, with which

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indeed they are obviously associated. Our received idea of this world owes more to Toulouse-Lautrec than anybody else, and there is no reason to think it very inaccurate. The circus, the vaudeville, the *bal,* were serious pleasures; the primitive, the ugly, the exotic were in demand. The brutal patter of Aristide Bruant, La Goulue coarsely cheeking the Prince of Wales, the emaciated and psychopathic May Belfort, the cherished ugliness of Mme. Abdala: all are characteristic. The mood is that of the violent Lautrec drawings of Guilbert and Jane Avril, of dancers calling themselves Grille d'Egout or La Goulue, of cafe-concerts named Le Divan Japonais and prostitutes with such noms de guerre as Outamoro. In this atmosphere all the dancers I am concerned with did their work, and were treated very seriously.

Of a good many of them it was enough to say, as Symons did in his excited lines on Nini Patte-en-l'air, that they possessed

The art of knowing how to be
Part lewd, aesthetical in part,
And fin-de-siècle essentially.

Symons was one of those Englishmen whose solemn Parisian pleasures were the admiration of Lautrec—Conder, the strangest of them, he often drew, superbly drunk in his fine evening clothes. But Symons was building an aesthetic in which dancing was to have a central place—the climactic essay is called "The World as Ballet"—and so his interest was slightly different from the painter's. Lautrec was equally absorbed by La Goulue and Jane Avril; but for Symons the former, a Messalina who wore her heart embroidered on the bottom of her knickers, was less important than the latter, who demonstrated that the female body was "Earth's most eloquent Music, divinest human harmony."

Sometime in the Thirties a French exhibition, devoted to life under the Third Republic, showed Jane Avril and Loïe

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Fuller as representing the Dance, and most of what follows is concerned with these dancers. Like Fuller, Avril had the reputation of literacy, and enjoyed the friendship of Lautrec, Renoir, Théodor Wyczewa, Maurice Barrès. It is clear from Lautrec's posters that what interested him was the lack of conventionality, almost the *gaucherie,* in her attitudes, her being set apart from all the other girls. She danced a good deal alone, and not only in the solo variation of the quadrille; she designed her own dresses, and got some of her effects by whirling movements possibly learned from the English dancer Kate Vaughan, who was also perhaps a source of inspiration to Fuller—she was well thought of in the Eighties and later for bringing back long skirts for dancers. Avril, again like Fuller, lacked formal training and mechanical predictability; Pierre Charron said she was like

> *une Fleur balancée, troublante*
> *Au souffle du vent chaud qui l'endort doucement . . .*

There is small doubt—and here lies much of her interest—that this dancer owed most to the air of morbidity of which Symons speaks, and specifically to the long time she spent in her 'teens as a patient of Charcot at the Salpétrière. This hospital, and particularly the ward of the *grandes hystériques,* in which Avril had been treated for her chorea, was used as a kind of alternative to music-halls; Charcot and his patients welcomed visitors, and the symptoms of hysteria[3] were well-known to a large public. Charcot is celebrated for having turned Freud "from a neurologist into a psychopathologist," but despite his discovery that he could induce hysterical symptoms by hypnotism, and his observation that certain nervous disorders were always a question of *"la chose génitale"* Charcot himself did not

3. Still thought of as a female disorder; Freud's Vienna paper on a male hysteric brought him a reproof from a senior who said that if Freud had known any Greek he would have seen that male hysteria is an impossibility. (E. Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. I. (1953).

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know as much as Freud was to learn from watching him.[4] He was greatly impressed by the resemblance between the symptoms of his patients and medieval descriptions and representations of demoniac possession and obsessive dancing. He seems not to have known the theory, now, I gather, beyond dispute, that the saltatory epidemics were caused by ergotism, a disease brought on by eating blighted rye. As early as 1877 he wrote of an hysteria patient who had hallucinations of serpents and exhibited "in an embryonic state and sporadic form, a specimen" of medieval dancing mania, emphasizing that the symptoms appeared "in a rudimentary state" and were arrested by compression of the left ovary. In 1887 he wrote, with Paul Richer, a book called *Les Démoniaques dans l'art,* in which he tries to show that the convulsions and dances of the possessed are characteristic of various stages in the hysterical seizures he had observed, and which he illustrates with sketches. Avril was never permanently cured of chorea, and had ample opportunity to observe her fellow-patients; whether by accident or design she seems to have reproduced some of the symptoms of hysterical dancing, doubtless in a rudimentary form, and I have no doubt that Charcot would have found Lautrec's famous poster *"Jane Avril aux serpents"* characteristic of hysteria. Considered in this light, as combining certain powerful aesthetic and pathological interests of the period, it is easy to see how Avril produced a *frisson nouveau* and encouraged the literati to love the highest when they saw it at the Moulin Rouge.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that a good many dancers came to be associated with avant-garde movements in the other arts, and there was to be an *idéiste* dancer, Valentine de Saint-Point, who performed against a screen upon which

4. Jones traces the development of Freud's psychoanalysis from this point. By 1892 he knew that "sexual disturbances constitute the sole indispensable cause of neurasthenia" (I. 282) (he gave up this word later) and by 1895, nine years after his studies with Charcot, the pattern was taking psychoanalytical shape. It was formed by 1897 (I. 294).

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"geometric shadows" were cast, and a Cubist and Dadaist dancer, Nina Payne, whose dancing to jazz music greatly pleased the fastidious Levinson. The Cubism, he said, must have something to do with a strange cylindrical *couvrechef* she wore. There were also vaguely Vorticist dancers in Mme. Strindberg's Cave of the Golden Calf in London just before the first war; we know that cut-outs and shadows were used (see F. M. Ford's novel, *The Marsden Case*) but the memoirs of the period are hazy about what went on, and Miss Margaret Morris, who certainly knows, will not say. Isadora Duncan was a "symbolist" dancer; but it is sometimes forgotten that she derived much that was admirable in her dancing from Loïe Fuller, and this brings me to the most important of all these names, to the woman who seemed to be doing almost single-handed what Diaghilev was later to achieve only with the help of great painters, musicians, and dancers.

Many living people must have seen Loïe Fuller, but there is no book about her, except her own autobiography, and no powerful tradition, as there is for Isadora Duncan. The standard reference books are scanty and inaccurate, and so should I have been, had I not had the good luck to encounter Mr. E. J. Nicol, a nephew of Elizabeth Nolan, who not only backed Fuller but carried out the famous experiments in textiles and dyes which were associated with the dancer's vogue. Mr. Nicol also belonged to Fuller's company as a child, and knows all about a great many matters which were kept secret, mostly of a technical sort. For all correct comments on such techniques in what follows Mr. Nicol is responsible, and for none that is incorrect. The rest of the material comes from diaries, newspapers, theater programs, publicity hand-outs, and the like; and, of course, the autobiography, *Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life* (1908, English version 1913).

Loïe Fuller was born in Illinois in 1862, under trying circumstances: She claimed to have caught a cold at birth which

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was never cured. She often repeated this claim, much as Isadora insisted that her character was predetermined from the womb ("Before I was born my mother was in great agony of spirit and in a tragic situation. She could take no food except iced oysters and iced champagne.") Throughout her life, Fuller made much of her congenital ill-health and demanded certain extraordinary attentions, but Mr. Nicol does not think she was particularly frail. A talented child, she captivated audiences with her songs at the age of five, at the age of thirteen with her temperance lectures, during which she exhibited colored illustrations of the liver. Later she went on the stage. Her early career was undistinguished, but she gave a hint of things to come by forming her own company and taking it on a long, but disastrous, tour of South America. In 1889 she made her first London appearance in *Caprice,* which opened on the 22nd of October at the Gaiety and closed almost at once. She went back to New York. At this time she had played everything from Shakespeare to burlesque but she had never danced.

In the early days of what is called Modern Dance it seems to have been a convention that all the best things happened by accident, like Ruth St. Denis's getting the idea of her oriental dancing from a cigarette packet. Loïe Fuller encouraged the idea that her art developed from one happy accident to the next. The first radical bit of luck came when she was acting, at a small New York theater, a part in which she was hypnotized. To get the atmosphere right the management arranged for the stage to be illuminated entirely by green footlights, while the orchestra played sad music. During this hurriedly mounted piece, Fuller found herself on stage wearing a gauzy Indian skirt that was much too long for her. She says in her book that it was a present from an heroic admirer who later fell in the Khyber Pass; and she told a French historian that she got it from another girl. Anyway, she hit upon the idea of gliding hypnotically about the stage, holding the skirt up. To her surprise there were pleased exclamations from the house: "It's a butterfly!" "It's an orchid!"

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She danced around amid applause and then dropped ecstatically at the hypnotist's feet, "completely enveloped in a cloud of the light material." Next day she put the skirt on again and was studying it in a looking-glass when she noticed that sunlight made it translucent: "Golden reflections played in the folds of the sparkling silk, and in this light my body was revealed in shadowy contour." Thereupon "gently, almost religiously," she waved the silk about, and saw that she had "obtained modulations of a character before unknown. . . . Finally I reached a point where each movement of the body was expressed in the folds of the silk, in a play of colours and draperies that could be mathematically and systematically calculated."

Such was the basis of her original act. She whirled about with her arms aloft—later she extended them with sticks concealed in the drapery—as shown in Toulouse-Lautrec's lithograph—and the resultant spiral or serpentine effect she differentiated into twelve characteristic motions or dances, each carried out with different lighting. The lighting was provided by an electric lantern with colored glasses, another device she was later to develop to an extraordinary degree. The final dance was performed in total darkness save for a single ray of yellow light crossing the stage. From the outset she invited attention to these optical effects; she was never beautiful, and even in those days too plump for her shadowy contour to be an important part of her appeal. This was new, though she admits modestly that at this stage she was "far from imagining that I had hold of a principle capable of revolutionizing a branch of aesthetics." Her very ignorance of classical technique was to contribute, with the hypnotic attitudes, the resemblances to natural objects, and the optical illusions, to her establishment as a living emblem of a new aesthetic.

The act was almost immediately successful. "Three cheers for the orchid, the cloud and the butterfly!" cried the New York audience. But the New York managers were full of greed and duplicity; she was at once plagued by imitators, some even using

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her name (a trouble she was to have for many years) and after certain vicissitudes and wanderings she found her true home in Paris, where she arrived in October, 1892. She was engaged to dance at the Folies-Bergère, and with a program of five dances including the Serpentine she achieved a fantastic success, which was augmented later in the decade when she returned with new items. All over Europe and America she was imitated, but never successfully, largely because of the care she took to keep secret the technical apparatus upon which she depended. She was not overstating her triumph when she said that the usual audience at the Folies-Bergère was every evening "lost amid a crowd composed of scholars, painters, sculptors, writers and ambassadors." Outside the theater, students pelted her with flowers and drew her carriage; the police, about to take brisk action against a procession obstructing circulation at the Madeleine, held their hands when they discovered that all was in honor of La Loïe Fuller.

At the time of her first success she was taken up by Rodin, who declared that she was "a woman of genius, with all the resources of talent" and "a Tanagra figurine in action." She painted Nature, he said, in the colors of Turner; she was the woman on the famous Pompeian frieze. Anatole France, who wrote a preface for her autobiography in 1908, called her "marvellously intelligent" but added that it was her unconscious that really counted. "She is an artist . . . the chastest and most expressive of dancers, beautifully inspired, who reanimated within herself and restores to us the lost wonders of Greek mimicry, the art of those motions, at once voluptuous and mystical, which interpret the phenomena of nature and the life history of living things." Other admirers were the Curies to whom she later dedicated a remarkable dance. She knew anybody she cared to know. Pretty well all the theatrical artists of Paris represented her at this time, notably perhaps Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec, whose lithograph is probably the best of all; but she asked neither Lautrec nor Steinlen for posters, preferring their imitators. A pretty poster drawing by Chéret hung in her dressing room.

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Loïe Fuller undoubtedly enjoyed all this. In a Paris that paid her 12,000 francs a month and was full of women wearing wide Loïe Fuller skirts, she expected a lot of attention. There is a note of rare disenchantment in an entry in Renard's diary (1901) which tells how he met Fuller in an omnibus, a shapeless figure too highly painted, sausage-fingered; intermittently smiling, as if everybody on the bus was the Public, and with vague myopic eyes. She was turned off the bus for not having her fare; Renard wanted to say, "Mademoiselle I know and admire you; *voilà dix sous!*" But he did not. It is surprising to hear of her using a bus; she lived extravagantly.

Her well-publicized hypochondria did not diminish. She took elaborate precautions against headache, and informed journalists that she was threatened with paralysis of the arms. Every performance ended in what looked like total collapse. Isadora Duncan, who did not love her, but does nothing to spoil the picture of Fuller as agreeably mysterious, hypochondriacal and queer, speaks of visiting her in Berlin, where she found her in a magnificent apartment at the Hotel Bristol, surrounded as usual by her entourage of beautiful girls who were "alternately stroking her hands and kissing her." "Here," says Isadora, who never forgave Fuller for launching her, "here was an atmosphere of such warmth as I had never met before." Fuller complained of terrible pains in the spine, and the girls had to keep up a supply of icebags, which were placed between her back and the back of the chair. Judge Isadora's surprise when, after an expensive dinner, Fuller went off and danced. "Had this luminous vision that we saw before us," asks Isadora, "any relation to the suffering patient of a few moments before?"

Fuller remained for a great many years enormously popular in the music halls of Europe. She conquered London, as they say, in 1893, appearing during the interval of George Edwardes' *In Town,* a show distinguished by May Belfort's performance of "Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow." But this did not prevent the English intelligentsia from taking her quite as seriously as

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the Parisian; for instance, there is an odd poem, in French, in *The Cambridge ABC* of June 11, 1894—it did not last long but had a cover by Beardsley—which refers to the *"Varicolore et multiforme"* Fuller, and uses such expressions as *"une volupté profonde . . . inquiétant mystère"* etc. The popular press found her both amazing and moral—her Mirror Dance showed *eight* Loïe Fullers "dancing as if they were the fabled victims of the Tarantula, the whole forming an artistic spectacular effect that the world has never seen equalled"; yet she made no "gesture or movement which would offend the susceptibilities of the most modest-minded of British matrons or maidens." Her long skirts seemed to bring about a long-needed *rapprochement* of Art and Morality. Quite early in her career she had built up a company, and her shows grew more elaborate. She had her own theater at the Paris Exposition, and in it she introduced Sada Yacco to the European public. Yacco's success, unlike Fuller's, was not unmixed. Eventually Fuller built around Yacco her "Japanese company"—I think Yeats had this company in mind when he spoke of her "Chinese Dancers" in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," for she seems never to have had a Chinese troupe—and took them, with Isadora Duncan, on a tour of Germany.

A French journal of the Exposition period describes her as *"parfaitement double . . . à la ville petite, à la scène grande . . . a very pushing woman."* By this time Mr. Tindall of *Pearson's Weekly* was willing to claim that "she had given the world such ideas of colour as had never been conceived before; look at the pictures in the Paris salons if you would see some of the more striking effects of Loïe Fuller's dancing . . . she ranks with the great geniuses of the ages." But she went on appearing at the Coliseum, in (for example) a variety bill called "La Miraculeuse Loïe Fuller in the Grand Musical Mystical Dances," which was itemized as follows:

(1) The Flight of the Butterflies (Radium)
(2) The dance of the 1,000 Veils

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This in five tableaux: Storm at Sea—Wrecked, Lost; The River of Death; The Fire of Life; Ave Maria; The Land of Visions. How two famous dances, the Butterfly (subject of many photographs) and Radium, a dance in honor of the Curies, came to be conflated, I do not know. The Land of Visions, Mr. Nicol surmises, was a way of using up some photographs she had taken of the surface of the moon. As time went by, she depended more and more on her company, but also upon ingenious optical effects. Before 1909 she had founded her School, and by 1912 the best dancers were allowed to take over her Lily, Serpentine and Fire Dances. But the new dances were more and more abstract. Her troupe had a great success in London in 1923 with a shadow ballet called *Ombres Gigantesques.* There are some splendid photographs in the *Sketch* for the 13th of December of that year, the eve of a charity performance to be attended by the King and Queen. An enormous shadow hand plucks at the cowering dancers; a vast foot descends to crush them. In other performances, for example in a ballet using Debussy's *La Mer,* the dancers were not seen at all, but simply heaved under a huge sea of silk. Rival performers came and went; but Fuller remained in the front line till her death in 1928.

The career of Fuller is untelligible without some reference to her technical repertory. She had, of course, her own aesthetic notions, and claimed to have brought about a revolution in the arts. At first she saw the dance as arising naturally from music, but expressing human emotion best when unimpeded by training. "The moment you attempt to give dancing a trained element, naturalness disappears; Nature is truth, and art is artificial. For example, a child will never dance of its own accord with the toes pointing out." Rodin expressly agreed, and Massenet was so struck with the doctrine that he gave Fuller unrestricted performing rights in his music without royalty. Debussy was also interested, and Florent Schmitt wrote Fuller's Salome music (1893). But she very often used commonplace music, and it is hard to believe that her mature doctrine was either musical or

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Loïe Fuller in "The Dance of Flame"

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expressive. When she says that "in the dance, and there ought to be a word better adapted to the thing, the human body should, despite conventional limitations, express all the sensations and emotions that it experiences" she is, presumably, echoing Delsarte, and had she maintained this view she would have been honored as the founder of Modern Dance, instead of Isadora Duncan. But she moved away from it. The line of the body, never, as we have seen, the principal exhibit in her performance, grew less and less important, and in the end hardly counted at all, witness those dances in which no human figure was perceptible to the audience. The story she tells of her stumbling upon a new art of illuminated drapes in motion—and this at the outset of her career—has the germ at any rate of the truth. In a theoretical chapter of her autobiography she has some reflections on Light and the Dance; she was greatly concerned with the affective qualities of color and its relation to sounds and moods (speculations much in vogue at the time) and was once thrown out of Notre Dame for waving a handkerchief in front of a sunlit window. She maintained the opinion that "motion and not language is truthful," a view not likely to meet much opposition among the poets of the time, but she did not mean the simple dancer's motions or even those involuntary gestures organized into art which are the basis of Modern Dance; she meant the manipulation of silk and light. With them she could penetrate the spectator's mind and "awaken his imagination that it may be prepared to receive the image."

Fuller used in her publicity a remark by Pierre Roche that she was unequalled as an electrician and used her colored lights on silk with a painter's art. In fact in the earliest days of theatrical electricity she seems to have gone a remarkably long way toward realizing that dream of a *Farbenkunst* which had been epidemic since the eighteenth century. She was given great credit for her skill at the time, not only by aesthetes who thought of the whole thing as a transcendent success for cosmetics, but by practical theater people. Sarah Bernhardt consulted her. There

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was growing interest in the spectacular possibilities of electric light on cheap materials, but nobody else brought off what Mallarmé called the "industrial achievement" of substituting colored light for all other properties, *instituant un lieu.*

The means by which she did this were closely-kept secrets. She put it about that one very striking effect was discovered by accident, when an electrician "the worse for strong drink, threw two lights of different colours on the stage together" (*Pearson's Weekly*). In fact, she was intensely preoccupied, and most ingenious, with light. She used the carbon arc-lights and colored gelatins with which the theaters of the period were equipped, but with colors of her own specification. More important, she designed large magic-lantern projectors with slides of plain or frosted glass. The slides, which she painted with liquefied gelatin, were the fundamental secret, and only Fuller and Miss Nolan had access to them. Theater men were not allowed to work the projectors, and the Company had its own trusted electricians. It was on such slides that she printed the photographs of the moon for the Nuages ballet. The bewildering "Radium" dance was done by projecting iridescent color onto silks, using first one multi-colored slide, then superimposing another, and then withdrawing the first. When one thinks of her influence on future stage-lighting, one should remember not only the Lyceum pantomimes in which she was regularly copied, but also that, as Mr. Nicol says, "our whole modern system of projected stage-lighting owes its origin to her ingenious mind." Experiments with colored shadows on the cyclorama, and also with mirrors, were natural developments of such interests.

Her innovations were not confined to lighting. She also did surprising things with silk. "The idea of dyeing and painting silk in terms of abstract colour and not of pattern seems, undoubtedly, to have been Fuller's own," writes Mr. Nicol. The work was carried out by Miss Nolan, and the dyed silks became a commercial success, still remembered as "Liberty" silks. Mr. Nicol would credit Fuller with an influence on Gordon Craig and others;

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certainly we have been underestimating her during all the years when her revolutionary innovations were forgotten. One has a clear picture of a performer who converted dancing into something other than just dancing, whose scenes and machines were of a new theatrical epoch, and whose gifts lay primarily in such invention. Writing of a performance at the *Théâtre Champs-Elysées* in June, 1922, Levinson said: "Even though she has the insipid primary *plastique,* the scholarly *faux-hellenisme* of the Anglo-Saxon (which forms an apparent link between her school and Isadora's) her personality is none the less fascinating. . . . She is a great imaginative creator of forms. Her drapes animate and organise space, give her a dream-like ambiance, abolish geometrical space. . . . Whatever belongs to the dance is ordinary; but *tout ce qui tient de l'optique est plein d'intérêt.*" Levinson had no doubt that this was a different matter entirely from *"les enfantillages caduces de Duncanisme et ces vaines danses d'expression."*

It is a little surprising, therefore, that much of Fuller's fame derived from her ability to represent natural objects—moths, butterflies, lilies, etc. Dances of this kind were frequently photographed, and she kept them in her repertoire right into the 'twenties. The serpentine dance is part of the history of *art nouveau;* it would be tedious to make a list of the compliments paid her by distinguished men on her power to reveal fugitive aspects of nature. Certainly some of the photographs are impressively moth-like and lily-like. With this strain of compliment there was mingled a persistent note of praise for her Orientalism and her Hellenism too. Such contradictions, if they are so, may be reconciled in the aesthetic of a Mallarmé; he wrote that the dancer was not a woman dancing but a metaphor containing elemental aspects of our form, sword, cup, flower, etc. And Symons, in "The World as Ballet," finds in the dance both "the evasive, winding turn of things" and "the intellectual as well as sensuous appeal of a living symbol." She was a power like one of nature's, and her creation had the same occult meanings.

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The heart of this matter is, indeed, the chorus of poetic approval, and the terms in which it was couched. Consider, for example, the Fire Dance, a popular item from early days. She told the credulous Mr. Tindall of *Pearson's Weekly* that this dance had its origin in an accident: when she was dancing her Salome at the *Athénée* (1893) she danced before Herod as "the setting sun kissed the top of Solomon's temple." But it also kissed her garments, and the public, always vocal, cried out and called it "the fire-dance." In fact this was merely another attempt to offset the cold electric calculations of Fuller. The *Danse du Feu* was lit from below stage, by a red lantern directed through a glassed-in trap. The effect was striking (*Pearson's Weekly* has some lurid colored photographs). Fuller appeared to the music of the Ride of the Valkyries, shaking, we are told, and twisting in a torrent of incandescent lava, her long dress spouting flame and rolling around in burning spirals. She stood, says Jean Lorrain, in blazing embers, *and did not burn*; she exuded light, was herself a flame. Erect in her brazier she smiled, and her smile was the rictus of a mask under the red veil that enveloped her and which shook and waved like a flame along her lava-nakedness. Lorrain goes on to compare her with Herculaneum buried in cinders (it wasn't, of course), the Styx and its banks, Vesuvius with open throat spitting fire. Only thus, he argued, could one describe her motionless, smiling nakedness in the midst of a furnace, wearing the fires of heaven and hell as a veil. Years later, Yeats was pretty certainly remembering this dance when he spoke in his "Byzantium" of the dance as an emblem of art, caught up out of nature into the endless artifice of his Byzantium, the endless death-in-life of the mosaic:

> *. . . . blood-begotten spirits come*
> *And all complexities of fury leave;*
> *Dying into a dance,*
> *An agony of trance,*
> *An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.*

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The Fire Dance had all the qualities Yeats asked of the art, for not only was the dancer unconsumed, but she also wore the obligatory enigmatic smile. "From this flame which does not burn," says Ménil in his *Histoire de la Danse* (1904), "there leaps, between two volutes of light, the head of a woman wearing an enigmatic smile." Ménil, as it happens, goes on—as Jourdain did—to question whether all this trickery of silk and electric light was really dancing at all, and he wonders how, from the vulgarity of the cheap glare and waving skirt there could come this hashish-like experience.

Other dances were greeted with equal rapture. Georges Rodenbach draws widely on Fuller's repertoire in his poem "La Loïe Fuller," first published in *Figaro* in May, 1896, and warmly praised by Mallarmé. Everything in Rodenbach's poem conspires to bring Fuller's performance into the position of an emblem of the Image of art, "self-begotten" in Yeats's favorite word, or like the body of a woman, yet not in any natural sense alive (*prodige d'irréel*), enigmatic, having the power of election. The darkness of the stage at the end of the performance is the natural darkness of the modern soul, which only the Image, hardly come by and evanescent, can illuminate: "the embrace of eternity lasts us only a short moment." More completely than any other dancer before her, Loïe Fuller seemed to represent in visible form the incomprehensible Image of art in the modern world,[5] as Mauclair said, "The Symbol of Art itself, a fire above all dogmas." And she remains the dancer of Symbolism, from Mallarmé to Yeats; a woman, yet totally impersonal, "dead, yet flesh and bone"; "*poème dégagé de tout appareil du scribe.*" "Thanks to her," said Roger Marx, "the dance has once more become the 'poem without words' of Simonides . . . above all one is grateful to her for giving substance to that ideal spectacle of which Mallarmé once dreamed—a mute spectacle, which escaped the limits of space

5. I ought to say that this passage will make more sense to anybody who has read my *Romantic Image* (1957).

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and time alike, and of which the influence, powerful over all, ravishes in one common ecstasy the proud and the humble." And Mauclair also said that here Mallarmé's dream came true.

It was in February, 1893, that Mallarmé went to the Folies-Bergère to see Loïe Fuller. It was an historic evening. André Levinson, complaining in the early 'twenties of the exaggerated deference paid in literary circles to the music hall, credits the Goncourts and Huysmans with beginning the vogue, but goes on: "one day Stéphane Mallarmé, aesthetician of the absolute, was seen pencilling, in his seat at the Folies-Bergère, his luminous *aperçus* on the so-called serpentine dances of Loïe Fuller. Since then the whole world has followed. . . ." What Mallarmé was writing emerged as a passage of prose notably difficult even for him; but it is the center, and indeed in most cases the source of contemporary poetic comment on Fuller.

There is dispute among students of Mallarmé as to the place of dancing in his unsystematic system, and less attention than might be expected is paid to this tribute to Loïe Fuller. But there seems to be no very good reason for discounting what it says: that she represented for him at least the spirit of an unborn aesthetic; that she represents a kind of spatial equivalent of Music; that she stands for the victory of what he called the Constellation over what he called Chance, *"le couronnement du labeur humain"* as Bonniet calls it in his Preface to *Igitur*. Like the archetype of Art, the Book, Fuller eliminated *hasard*. Thibaudet, indeed, believed that the whole concept of the book owed something to Mallarmé's meditations on the dance; so did Levinson, arguing that Mallarmé glimpsed in the ballet "a revelation of the definitive *Oeuvre* which would sum up and transcend man"; so, more recently, does M. Guy Delfel. The fitness of the dance as an emblem of true poetry is clear. Valéry was expanding the views of Mallarmé when he made his famous comparison between them (poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking). Mallarmé's growing concern for syntax, so surprisingly and irrefutably demonstrated by L. J. Austin, does not militate

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against this view that the dance took over in his mind some of the importance of music; for syntax is the purposeful movement of language and such movement has, in either art, to be assimilated to the necessarily autonomous condition of the Image. The dance is more perfectly devoid of ideas, less hampered by its means, than poetry, since it has not the strong antipathy of language toward illogic; yet it is not absolutely pure; the dancer is not inhuman. Mallarmé deals with precisely this point in the opening article of *Crayonné au Théâtre* (before 1887), when he discusses the ambiguous position of the dancer, half-impersonal, very like the position of the poet ("the pure work requires that the poet vanish from the utterance" in so far as he can). But Fuller was more purely emptied of personality: an apparition, a vision of eternity for Rodenbach; for Mallarmé *"l'incorporation visuelle de l'idée."*

If it seemed necessary, as it did, for poets to reclaim their property from music, the dance provided something more exactly fitted as an emblem of what was aspired to; and in a sense Fuller stands for the liberation of Symbolist poetic from Wagner. She is much more properly the Symbolist dancer than any orthodox ballerina; and there is a clear discontinuity between the general admiration for dancers, of French poets earlier than Mallarmé and his praise of Fuller. In Baudelaire the human and palpable element counts for much; in Gautier also. But in the new age, the age of Mallarmé and Yeats, what matters is that the dancer "is not a woman"; that she is "dead, yet flesh and bone." The difference constitutes a shift in the whole climate of poetry, represented by the shift in English poetics from Symons to Pound, from Symbolism as primarily an elaborate system of suggestion, of naming by not naming, to the dynamism of the Vortex and the Ideogram. For Fuller is a kind of Ideogram: *"l'incorporation visuelle de l'idée,"* a spectacle defying all definition, radiant, homogeneous.

Such, at any rate, was the way those people saw Fuller who saw her with eyes opened to dance as a *majestueuse ouverture*

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on a reality beyond flux. They saw in her *"la voyante de l'infini."* When Diaghilev came, defying the *genres,* overwhelming the senses with music and color and movement, one or two people perhaps remembered her as having been the first to do it. I am convinced that Valéry did. Again and again he returns to the dance as a satisfactory emblem of a desirable poetry. It best illustrates what he calls non-usage—"the *not* saying 'it is raining' ": this is the language of poetry; and movement which is not instrumental, having no end outside itself, is the language of dancing. "Poetry, like dancing, is action without an end." As the dancer makes an image of art out of the quotidian motions of her body, so the poet must from language "draw a pure, ideal Voice, capable of communicating without weakness, without apparent effort, without offense to the ear, and without breaking the ephemeral sphere of the poetic universe, an idea of some Self miraculously superior to Myself." The Dance makes of an activity of the body—sweat, straining muscle, heaving chest—an idea, a diagram of a high reality. Valéry called his dialogue, *L'Ame et la Danse,* of 1921, "a sort of ballet of which the Image and the Idea are Coryphaeus in turn." The dialogue embodies in language of refined wit and gaudy elegance the essence of our post-Wagnerian aesthetic. Athiktè, the central figure, is usually thought of as a conventional ballet dancer; and she does dance on her points. But, as Levinson said in his pamphlet on the dialogue (*Paul Valéry, poète de la danse,* 1927) the *tourbillon,* her ecstatic finale, is not merely a ballet step, it is the whirling of a mystic's dance. Though Valéry collected ballet photographs, they were of a special sort, *chronophotographies;* the plates were exposed in darkness, the dancers carrying lights; and the result was a whirl of white lines, a record of the pattern of aimless poetical acts. In any case, we need not suppose him so devoted to the ballet as to have forgotten Loïe Fuller. He was on the point of refusing the invitation to write the dance dialogue because he "considered . . . that Mallarmé had exhausted the subject" and undertook it finally with the resolve that he would make Mal-

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larmé's "prodigious" writings on the subject "a peculiar condition of my work." So I believe that when he came to write the passage comparing the dancer with a salamander—living "completely at ease, in an element comparable to fire," he was remembering Fuller. The passage culminates in a long, rhapsodical speech from Socrates: "what is a flame . . . if not *the moment itself?* . . . Flame is the act of that moment which is between earth and heaven . . . the flame sings wildly between matter and ether . . . we can no longer speak of movement . . . nor distinguish any longer its acts from its limbs." Phaedrus replies that "she flings her gestures like scintillations . . . she filches impossible attitudes, even under the very eye of Time!" Eryximachus sums it up: "Instant engenders form, and form makes the instant visible." And when the dancer speaks, she says she is neither dead nor alive, and ends: "Refuge, refuge, O my refuge, O Whirlwind! I was in thee, O movement—outside all things. . . ." A Bergsonian dancer almost, *"révélatrice du réel"* as Levinson says.

The propriety of yoking together Avril and Fuller as I have done here is now, perhaps, self-evident. Avril is a smaller figure altogether, but she demonstrates the strength of the link between dancing and poetry, as well as the important pathological element in the dancer's appeal. Fuller deserves, one would have thought, some of the attention that has gone to Isadora. Levinson, who repeatedly declares his faith in classical dancing as the one discipline *"féconde, complète, créatrice,"* respected Fuller, but despised Duncan as having no technique, no beauty, no suppleness, her feet flattened and enlarged by years of barefoot prancing, her music primitive. The fact is that Duncan was much more the Tanagra figurine, the dancer from the Pompeian fresco, than Fuller, who earned these descriptions in her early days. And Duncan certainly did not submerge her personality in strange disguises and unnatural lights. The Modern Dance has developed theories sufficiently impersonal to make it intensely interesting to Mrs. Langer, creating a symbolic reality in-

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dependent of nature. But it depends always upon the body—upon the power of the body not to express emotion but to objectify a pattern of sentience. Fuller with her long sticks, her strange optical devices, her burying the human figure in masses of silk, achieved impersonality at a stroke. Her world was discontinuous from nature; and this discontinuity Valéry, speaking of his Symbolist ancestry, described as "an almost inhuman state." She withdrew from the work; if to do otherwise is human, said Valéry, "I must declare myself essentially inhuman."

This is the doctrine of impersonality in art with which T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot among many others have made everybody familiar. "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. . . . The more perfect the artist the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates." Thomas Parkinson, commenting on Ortega y Gasset's "dehumanization," "a point can be reached in which the human content has grown so thin that it is negligible"—remarks acutely that the confused reception accorded to Pound's *Pisan Cantos* was due to critical shock at their identification of the sufferer and the creator. Pound, in leaving off his "ironic covering," simply broke with a rule of poetics that he himself had done much to enforce. Mr. Parkinson is glad; he wants to let "the reek of humanity" back into poetry, where he thinks it belongs, and he seems to regard the impersonality doctrine as a lengthy but temporary deviation from some true "romantic aesthetic." I am not sure that he is right, or how far he misunderstands the human relevance of what the impersonal artist attempts. Mrs. Langer would have an answer for him; and in any case Pound does not show the way back to reeking humanity. In Mr. Eliot, in Valéry, we surely are aware of what Stevens called "the thing that is incessantly overlooked: the artist, the presence of the determining personality," and this presence is consistent with "impersonality."

However this may be, Fuller's progressive extinction of the dancing body was a necessary component of her success as an

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emblem of the Image, out of nature. The imagination of the spectator fed upon her, independently of what she intended (she once caught sight of herself in a glass when dancing, and was surprised that what she saw bore no relation to her intention). She is abstract, clear of the human mess, dead and yet perfect being, as on some Byzantine dancing floor; entirely independent of normal action, out of time. It is a highflown way of talking about an affected music-hall dancer with an interest in stage lighting; and we should hardly venture it without the authority of Mallarmé. Yet she was not a mere freak. Dancers are always striving to become, like poems, machines for producing poetic states; "they labour daily," as Levinson says, "to prevent a relapse into their pristine humanity." Only when the body is objectified in this way does it function, in the words of Whitehead, as "the great central ground underlying all symbolic reference." Also, it dies; and in so far as it is permitted to appear like something that does, it cannot represent victory over *hasard,* perfect being, the truth behind the deceptive veil of intellect. How is this to be overcome? "Slash it with sharp instruments, rub ashes into a wound to make a keloid, daub it with clay, paint it with berry juices. This thing that terrifies us, this face upon which we lay so much stress, is something they have always wanted to deform, by hair, shading, by every possible means. Why? To remove from it the terror of death, by making it a work of art." So William Carlos Williams on primitive ways into the artifice of eternity. Fuller's dehumanization was by another way; it is very closely related to a critical moment in the history of modern poetics, but it is also, and this is as we ought to expect, rooted in the terror and joy of obscure primitive ground from which modern poets draw strength for their archaic art.

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POEMS

ROUTE WITH NO NUMBER

If you want to come after me for any reason
I have left money in the bread-box,
Heart in the ice-box
And in the mail-box, around the key,
A handkerchief for good-byes.

When you come to the end of the Avenue of Promises
And the dead bird falls from the tree
Turn away: it is the far fork.
At the Turnstile of the Hesitants I have left
A ticket for you in a little bee-hole at eye level.
The toll keeper is not honest but he is
Cowardly and he has no legs.
Then in the empty boulevard with its view
Of the revolving hills you will see no car-tracks
But you will hear the sound of a street-car and discover
That the road is moving under your feet, it is
Not bad: rows of portraits on either side
Like cell windows along a corridor, and
Your shadow ducking its head as it passes.

Oh it's passable, and besides I contrive
As I always did, to keep thinking
Of improvements, for instance
The other day ducks went over on their creaking wings
So I thought, "In the future there will be
No more migration, only travel,

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No more exile, only distances."
Also it's hard to convey how indifferent
I had become to the jabber of bells
And the senseless applause of clocks.
And then today, without warning, at a place
Where they speak no language, the collectors came through
For my back taxes, my present taxes
And my future taxes whether I arrive or not.
I fooled them of course in the old way.
And they fooled me in the old way
And took everything but a few false decisions in the old way,
And I pray for them in the old way:
May the tracks be laid over them
And their fingers be picked off like daisy petals:
"She loathes me, she loathes me not."

Either way, I must tell you, in my present place
I can't hold out hope or any other flags.
There's not even a little privacy: you can see
Eyes lined up to ripen on all the sills.
And once here you're better than I am
If you can find your way back again.

However, I have visited the Day of the Dog,
But it was not yet open and I passed on.
Tell Mrs. H. just the same,
Who said I'd never get anywhere.
I have gone faithfully into all the churches
And passed on, disappointed.
I have seen streets where the hands of the beggars
Are left out at night like shoes in a hotel corridor.
Several I thought had once been mine and might be again.
I have found many lost things, and I have left them that way:
I have created enough disturbance.
I have come on many wasted things,
I have not yet come to my youth.

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Now I am sitting
Behind filthy nightscapes, in the echoing room provided,
Among a few retired ornaments.
All the words have been emptied from the books.
The heating is hopeless at any hour. I am
Eating one of my last apples and waiting
For my departure to overtake me
With its empty windows coming up
Like cards, the game
Always turns out the same,
Mother, Father, Luke and John,
My line, my sign, my love,
Think of the cards that were held out to me
And I had to choose this one.

W. S. Merwin

VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI

Push past these watery curtains
and you find
a dream, fantastic grottoes of the cardinal's mind
where sea-beasts frolic in the rain.

This is the savage well controlled,
this other
world of aspiration, for here we need not bother
with nymphs who leave the woods defiled,

or satyrs grazing on our lawns,
vulgar, wild
and uninvited. This is our solitude self-willed
from intruding eyes; here, we're born

into ourselves again, like moss
and rainbow
rising about Bernini's monsters; and here, we show
the gods a civilizing force

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tortured into significance.
The water
falls as we choose, upward even, imposing order
that comes from us alone, not chance.

Among all these rocks and rivers
we suffer
our own creation; shuddering into life, we bear
upright the weight of good weather.

Donald Lehmkuhl

BUDDED OAKS

I waken, winter gone like sleep,
And I, who had gone with it,
Go with it no more: thirty
Is a task that has been done,
A path below the budded oaks.
Blood sings in a crown of dust
And I, alive in a listening
Skull lift down the wrinkled skin
That laughter wore, that I
Will wear to dress all love,
All laughter still to come—
For ugliness will last forever
And I would have a hundred years
In this same skin and all
The young and all the old
For lovers. I do not walk alone
Who walk with morning on the hill,
For the round earth and sun go
Before me toward the grave and red-
Leaved maples cry out to my blind
Image in the cold and moving stream.

Patricia Coombs

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Jascha Kessler

THE DETECTIVE

Thirty years in hotels, and never had Mr. Acker had to put up with what he had to put up with this season! Dizzy, and half blind with righteousness, this pale, soft man slipped through the grey door swinging back on the heel of the head busboy . . . for a change this was a nice boy who could keep order among that squad of the usual rabble of boys: what was his name again? David, of course! they called him Davie—so many came and went, all alike in their black silk tuxedo pants and starched bolero jackets . . . and stopped abruptly, and flapped his arms: Vexation! His glasses had fogged over from the climate of the kitchen, a steam-room's. He tore them off and stood his ground, abstractedly polishing the rimless bifocal lenses with a fresh table napkin he had pulled from his hip pocket, his tired, puffy, redrimmed, weak grey eyes crossed blank but fierce an inch beyond the end of his sharp nose. That he, so scrupulous, methodical, precise, that he, Acker, merely for the sake of a rotten, miserable, yet nevertheless after all breakable contract, should have to take such an abuse! All right, in this business a manager can be a pain in the neck, but you have to have a manager; an owner on the premises day and night is worse; but an owner-manager—*tschuk!* And that it should be even worse than last year, slaving for those cheap Hungarian refugees with the blue numbers tattooed on their left arms; husband and wife, doubly an owner-manager plague! and on top of that, grasping and grim Hungarians whom the world owed a twenty per cent return on the bad investment of their reparations money—that it should be this fat four-hundred pounds of fake, this ignoramus who could only have stolen the cash, on the black market probably, to buy himself a payment down on a hotel, this American Legion fascist bully who

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had the gall to make people call him Major! Why Major? How Major? Major what? Try to think of it: Julius Gruber, Major, the United States Army. What kind of monster U.S. Army it must have been! And then his own shriveled-up, nervous stick of a wife—poor thing, so skinny now there was hardly a place to stick the needle—takes to asking him what *the* Major said today, what *the* Major did today . . . how could Acker ever have let himself be talked into such a stewardship? It must have been the long, fat green cigar that Gruber spieled him with, the golden ruby ring on the curled white left pinky and the diamond with six sapphires clustered on the thick right pinky, and the way that hairless gorilla with the jewelry of a pasha on his hands hypnotized him into signing on. Really! he just didn't have to stand for it, Acker decided as he stood there stuck on the thought of making a stand for once on the principle of his individual self-respect, even if it meant a scandal. What a spot to be in! He began hooking his glasses on, and halted in the niche on his right where he had ducked to avoid the trayful of dishes wobbling by him, and surveyed the kitchen.

What a decrepit joint this Metropole was. The *New* Metropole, it said on the stationery. Really! In kitchens you can see all kinds, mostly the worst crumb-bums, but whose idea of a crew was this? Even if it was a busy year, there had to be better specimens for hire. There had to! Was there never a bottom to the barrel? He was looking at the salad-man, whose hairy arms shook with a furtive and anxious ineptitude as he stooped over the ice-filled counter and laid out single sheets of that tough lettuce, covering them disgracefully with hacked-up slices of tomato—and the tomatoes Acker was able to afford this past week certainly needed more skillful cutting than this. *Mac*—did salad-men anywhere ever need another name?—trembled and said nothing because it was his first job in fifteen years: a convict, hunched and scared and stupid. Fortunately not a drunk: the two drunks, real old dirty fairy bums, slouched on their stools by the dishwasher, letting the busboys tilt their full trays over and make a hideous racket instead of calling for quiet, and smoked one guinea-stinker between them, suck and puff, suck and puff, turn and turn about. And down at the far end, quarreling with chef, those two waitresses long past sixty who thought they bossed the show: what a collection of hennaed heads

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and varicosed legs and clackety teeth. One was whining "Where's my *spec*ials?" and the other echoed "Where's *my* specials?" Tilly and Riva, terrorizers of the dining room floor. But not here, not chef: "Look girls, I don't give no specials today. Just what's on the bill a fare, you hear? I tell you before, and once is all I tell you."

Mr. Acker watched Hermann. He knew well why he wasn't giving out specials tonight. But the question was, would his face tell him anything? Pooh! If it *was* Hermann, he'd been a head chef too many years to get caught so easy. A lot that nazi cared for the spot Acker was in. A crazy man, always banging his chopper down an inch from you. All he had to do was let that Hermann think he thought it was him, and bam! a collection of fingers, a hand even, lost; you know—by accident? Accident! Up and down Schulze was known as a maniac, a no-good nazi butcher. And only Gruber was such a bad manager as to hire him at top chef's pay, busy season or no. So it might be Hermann. Very simply it might.

The headwaiter came in and hurried past him, followed by the angry Tilly who had run out to fetch him to the kitchen. It could be this nasty, rotten, skinny, chainsmoking horseplayer, very easily it could be Israel—*Mister* Israel, if you please!—with his bookie, and all his new suits, even for a headwaiter much too many suits and shoes, and, moreover, mind you, not one but *two* apartments in Long Beach, each with a tomato in it. So, you might be a sure winner if you bet Israel could use a little extra, like, for example, a couple or three tons of beef a week? Somebody should feed *him* the nags that ate up his lettuce. He watched him go to complain to Schulze in his soft suave voice about not getting those specials for his best-tipping guests: it meant trouble with the waitresses, and tedious explaining to his customers, who would give so much less a chair in retaliation. Well, if it *was* Israel, he couldn't have it both ways. He, Acker, provided enough specials *and* extras enough. If it was missing it was missing. He couldn't procure twice. And would not. But would Israel be so stupid as to give his girls slips for extras and specials if he himself knew there was nothing in the box tonight? No. Yet he might! Yes, he might! Would it not make Mister Israel appear innocent? Therefore, *you too,* Israel!

Finally, there was that Gruber himself. He could (and he was the type), he could very easily be stealing out of his own pockets.

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It was possible, it had been done before, Acker had heard once somewhere. Next thing you knew the Hotel Metropole burns down, say after Labor Day just after the guests go, but before the expense of cleaning up the dump for the holidays. And just who do you suppose would be in a position to collect? Who else? Acker, he adjured himself, Acker, you be sure and get yourself and the books out a couple of days before the end comes! So if it was Gruber, he had his some nerve to yell at him right in the dining room while guests were still eating. And in that animal voice, he had to make a big speech, looking around to see does everybody hear him, "Acker! you're steward here, not me! Acker, you keep track of the pantry, not me! If you can't check off when everything comes in and keep the record straight, what the hell kind of lousy steward did I hire anyway, eh? You get in there, you get busy and make sure there's enough for the party tomorrow too. And if there isn't, you better make goddam well sure there is. You tell me—I'm listening—what the hell is so hard about your lousy little job anyway, Acker? You take in, and you give out. Consequently, you got to have what to give out if—*if,* I say, you hear me? it's a big if—*if* you took it in. Eh? Get me? And if *not,* Acker, why not? And if so, Acker, where is it? You're my steward, you got to be the one who knows. If this happened in the army, Acker, know what I could do to you? Do you know? Court-martial, Mr. Steward: court . . . mar . . . shul! Ten years hard labor, Acker, and I mean hard! Twenty! So get your wheels off the ground, see?"

"But you saw the shop, you saw the box. Cleaned out." And he'd protested: "Mr. Gruber, it's Saturday night. On Saturday night the jobbers don't exactly sit by the phone in their office." But in vain.

"Your business, not mine, Mr. Steward Acker. Get busy. Find out. Get food. When that gala wedding reception for the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Smith begins tomorrow afternoon, I want to see full service for three hundred guests, as per ordered. How long do you think the baker has to wait for his fruits tonight, and when can Schulze start in preparing without his meat? Acker, I'm telling you, it's all paid for on the line: so they better get their good time *with* food.

"Yes sir, I see."

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"Yessir what?"

"Yes sir, Mr. Gruber."

What did he think it was still, the Army? Acker felt again the pang of humiliation low in his belly that he had answered like some punk busboy draftee. What right did Gruber have to make him grovel just because he had employed him out of all the others, what right? Acker leaned back against the wall to support himself in this thought of his misfortune and sorrow, and got a jolt of surprise. The wall rattled: it was hollow. He stooped and peered into the obscurity of the angle in which he had been hiding. There was a snaplock there. He pulled, and a door opened. It was a dumbwaiter. What the hell! They must have given room service here once, even in this lousy building. Room service! In Long Beach! Hey hey! He stuck his head inside and peered up into the dark for an instant, until he realized that the ropes were quivering and moving, slowly and quietly and quite as if well-greased. He pulled back, startled, and waited. Sure enough, the next minute the dumbwaiter came on down, empty, and slid past him like an apparition. His jaw fell open; but why he was so amazed he could not at that instant have thought. He looked in again. It had stopped just below. Nothing happened. *What . . . is . . . this?* he murmured, and immediately resolved to find out. Straightening his back, drawing a sharp breath, he stepped out and walked resolutely through the kitchen, looking neither to right nor left, and marched out the screen door at the back and down the dirty wood steps where one of the colored elevator boys leaned jacketless in the quiet, smoking a cigarette and contemplating half a bottle of beer. Acker went along the sandy alley until he came to the basement entrance, where he glanced about to see if he had been noticed by anyone. So far, so good.

As he proceeded down the low-ceilinged, mildew-ish basement he struggled to compose himself. Remember, he warned himself, you don't know what you're looking for, and besides there may be nothing to find; but if you do, be calm, be logical, be sane. Now, to think a little, for instance, where would that dumbwaiter come down? He walked more slowly, and attempted to visualize the layout of the floor above. He turned left following the corridor beneath the lobby now—yes, there were the rickety stairs that continued down from the "Grand Staircase"—and left again, past the furnace

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room, of course unused now, in August. It did not occur to him to poke into the furnace room: for thirty years he'd kept his nose clean, and he was too used to his decent way of life. This corridor, now, went to the rooms of the kitchen-men and elevator boys, an area of unpleasant sights and stinks; hence he went left again, back to the section beneath the kitchen. Here he found his path blocked by heaps of dirty linens—towels, pillowslips, spreads, blankets, napkins, tablecloths, workclothes, uniforms—all bundled up in sheets tied by four corners. He realized he was headed for the linen room, the domain of that witch, Mrs. Jewett. All right, then why was he here? he asked himself as he clambered over and around the heaped bundles. The question remained unanswered as he turned the corner and emerged into a bright and dry zone of the cellar, rather towards the front of the building under the airy lobby, he should have thought, but as it turned out in a little while he was quite wrong. He had been drawn on by the sound of women's laughter. A half dozen of the maids, three white, three colored, were standing in line, smoking and chattering, waiting while the housekeeper counted linens out to them. And there was Mrs. Jewett behind her chicken-wire grill, her grey head bent, her liverspotted hands skimming piles of towels and from long custom picking up batches of exactly ten. The girls fell silent as he burst on them, and the housekeeper looked up, sharpeyed and testy and shrewd.

"Well, Mr. Acker, how d'ye do this evening!"

"Fine fine, Mrs. Jewett. If you'll excuse me. . . ."

"Well, well, what is it I can do for you? You look as if you wanted something. It is a surprise to see you still here on a Saturday night; shouldn't you be home to supper? Is there something wrong?"

"I'm sorry to be bothering you, Mrs. Jewett. I know how you must be busy, Saturday night and everything, finishing up here, and it's late enough—"

"Late indeed, sir, and you *are* bothering me! Don't beat about the bushes. Come on, speak up."

"Frankly, I don't know exactly, I was just walking around here and . . ."

"What! Mister Solomon Acker! Just speak up, man! My girls can't wait here all night while you stroll about through this miser-

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able damp and dreary hole in the cursed sand to pay social calls on my working hours."

But Mr. Acker felt himself strangely possessed, and paid her no attention. Though he too was surprised at his boldness, he managed to look over her frowning face, trying not to seem to notice her perfect grey wig with its forty-year-old ironed hairdo that never changed a strand. Beyond her he found what he had been searching for: a small white-washed door: the door to his dumbwaiter. With rude glee he pointed at it, "And what is that, if you please, Mrs. Jewett?"

"What is what, Acker?" she answered with another question, a suspicious note of brass in her voice.

"That door there. Does anyone use it?"

Unwillingly she looked where he pointed. "What do you mean by that question, sir, if I may ask?"

"I mean—" he tried to sound disingenuous, though firm "—does anyone use it, for anything, at all?"

"*I* am *not* anyone, Mr. Acker, and I do not *do anything*."

He found himself almost violently impatient to stop this indirect cross-questioning of her and get to the bottom of the lead he thought he had found. He brushed past the girls, pushed open the mesh door to her sanctum, and pressed himself in, knocking over a stack of new sheets. From the side of his eye he noticed that the housekeeper's mouth was open: probably no one had forced himself into her private cubicle in forty years. He was indeed risking her bitter enmity. But if there was a first time for him there could even be a first time for her! *No one had the right not to be questioned!* Anyhow, his job and his repute were at stake, he reflected; and so set his teeth together and went on. Inadvertently he upset more linen; worse yet, stepped on them, again inadvertently, as he reached for the catch on that door. Yanking it open, he saw what he had suspected: halfway down in the opening was his dumbwaiter.

"Mrs. Jewett! What is this?" he hissed.

"The dumbwaiter, Mr. Acker. What else?"

"I mean, what is it for? I mean, I just saw it moving. I was upstairs, in the kitchen."

"It is a very lucky convenience providence designed for me,

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sir. If you must know, I give my girls fresh linen and they can send back the soiled without having to drag it publicly up and down and around five or six flights of stairs. And what do you find wrong with that?"

"Oh,I see." So *she* used it. But another idea jumped up in his brain then, and he looked at his feet, suddenly mortified: was he suspecting *her,* too? Why not, she was tough enough. But if she was in on it, a ringmember, then she must know his predicament; and if she was spiriting the meat away, he could hardly expect her help. He saw a bundle of used sheets in the corner. The outside one had a rather large, irregular, rusty stain on it. Obviously, it occurred to him, and without thinking any further, here, *here* was his clue to the missing meat, the five tons of beef gone in less than two weeks. He kicked at it, placed his foot triumphantly on the bundle, and heard himself shouting, "Aha! And what is *this,* Mrs. Jewett? Where does *this* come from?"

"Mr. Acker! I *am* surprised to hear you speaking in this way. This is a hotel, my dear sir, it is open to the public—as well you ought to know after thirty years. All sorts of your people come here. And we who are but servants don't look; neither do we ask. If you must, shame yourself by dirtying your nose with what's none of your affairs, but don't expect *me* to follow where you lead!"

Acker was beginning to say that it was very, very much his affair, when he understood that he was not thinking of the same thing that she was. Not in the least. "Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Jewett. Excuse me, please."

"What is it, for goodness sake? What can it be, Mr. Acker?"

He smiled deprecatingly, shrugged with his wrists, and then, as the inspiration hit him like a bolt, said out very loud in a completely irrelevant and prophetically rapt voice, "Of course! My God, of course! *What comes down must go up!*" He turned and waddled off, flopping his elbows in haste, and paid no heed to the coughing and the smothered giggles, uncontrollably female, that rose behind him into a stupid fit.

At last, having stopped to look to it that his storerooms and his office were secured, he gained the alley where he paused for a breather. His face glowed with the sweat of anticipation, his heart thumped in embarrassed excitement again because he felt he was

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going to get somewhere now, he was on the right path, though still he hadn't any notion where it led, and had not given proper thought to his immediate, his real task: procuring a delivery of meat and specialties, and getting it in by morning. In fact, he'd already forgotten that tomorrow was Sunday, that he should have been home long ago, relaxing, and having eaten, and showered, and that he should have been by now all spruced for his wife's evening promenade on the boardwalk where they contemplated the callow princes and princesses playing out their twelve weeks, their brief summer's glory.

Outside, it was not as bad as such a fulminating day might have warranted. Down the alley the sun was about to sink behind the privet which screened the new patio-and saltwater-swimming-pool of the Miramar, once the Avalon, before that the Empire Royale. He looked at his watch: eight-ten. Overhead the sky was yet light: a pale, weak, Florida blue where striplets of cloud swam, iridescent, much like an idle school of pickled herrings. Luckily, a suggestion of air, perhaps the onset of the seawind that could usually be counted on, except for a day as hot as this had been, stirred off the water. Acker listened, but heard no sound of surf; the Atlantic must have been still and sweet as a pond. Swallows darted chirping through this narrow alley between the back of the Metropole and the old Egyptian Nights hotel. More people used to prefer sitting in lukewarm brackish Turkish baths than swimming in the ocean. He remembered the last time he had been into this place—more than twenty years ago, surely. It was with poor Paulie, his best friend, who'd emigrated to California ten years before and then come home from the desert rich, come home to Brooklyn to die on him, as it turned out. They had had a drink or few, too many it could be, and then gone to these baths to straighten themselves out; it was here the dirty crooks stole his wallet right from the safe, and then had the absolute nerve to accuse *him,* Acker, of lying, only because his bad luck was compounded: somehow he had mislaid his valuables ticket! That was on a Saturday night, he remembered, and it cost him his week's wages. Since then he had never gone home to his wife on Saturday later than nine, and never polluted. When would they tear down this empty, nailed-up hulk already, with its disgracefully weatherbeaten and shredding shing-

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ling and its sagging walls and the glamorous name on the front fading away to nothing, and build something decent here? This year, he had often noticed shadows sneaking in and out the busted cellar door there, even in daytime. Couples, he supposed. Why not? The house was empty: what else was it good for, especially because there was no privacy for anybody in laying out on the damp cold sand under the boardwalk, even late at night, but to make the alley such tight work for his delivery trucks. Musing, he looked up at the sky again and saw the crooked flights of the Metropole's corroded fire-escape, which zigged at the landings, each marked by a tin, red-painted door, red the color of stale blood, locked open to catch whatever air. Then, he saw a figure, at this hour probably a busboy, come out of the top exit and stand there on the grating—Acker shaded his eyes the better to squeeze him into focus—what would that be, five? six? no, seventh floor, it was. Whoever it was looked around and leaned over; did he think somebody was watching him? Acker waited. Curious—wouldn't that be the attic floor? Then he recalled that the Metropole was unusual in Long Beach in this respect, that whereas in other places the dining room crew had to live, live! in the basement in cold, wet, cramped and rank-smelling rooms, here they had the whole roof to themselves: busboys, children's waiters, waitresses and maids all scattered together. Not damp, but also not exactly cool today! The lazy band, and the time-wasting office girls, *they* got regular rooms, crummy, yes, but still hotel rooms, and the people who were supposed to look fresh like daisies when they handled the food Acker brought in with such a skillful care for the details—they were treated like the scum of the earth, almost as bad as the kitchenmen, who were. Well, what could you do? Now he perceived that the kid up there was eating out of what looked like a pot held in the crook of his arm, and that every two bites he swigged from a bottle, milk probably. But if the help finished eating at five-thirty, why should he be packing it in all over again so soon? But suppose . . . suppose what? Acker came back to himself with a start. Food! He wheeled and rushed back to his office where it was always cold night, picked up the phone and started methodically working down his list of suppliers, first local, then Brooklyn, finally all the way over to New York. By nine-twenty he was through, with fair assurances that his goods

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would begin arriving by twelve o'clock, for a price. He sighed, deeply, as he locked up once more, and headed upstairs to find Gruber and to vindicate his efficiency as the steward, even under such an unexpected, crowding and pushing, unkind, almost unfair tide of fate.

Now the lobby was crowded with those random groups of every age, standing around after a too-full dinner to recover breath. In their colorful Saturday night summer-sports and semiformal-play clothes and flushed by the sun, they were like proud and besotted kine of Bashan, and Acker felt ashamed for his white face shadowed with black beard, his bald brow streaked with poor strands of hair unthickened by salty water, and his gray working clothes, crumpled and creased and sweatpatched in their service. With his eyes cast meekly down, he sidled along the back wall to the desk, hunting Gruber by ear. The man was apparently not anywhere in the lobby, where he certainly ought to have stationed himself, as any proper manager would have done, seeing to it his guests could see him and talk to him in case they might want something—which the type of nuisances who frequent houses like the Metropole usually did: give them pinkest salmon steak, and why not swordfish? give jellied cold pike, and why not poached whitefish? Give, give, give; still there is no end to their want! Neither was Gruber on the blued concrete veranda—call this the *grande piazza du Metropole?*—where he saw only a number of the incompetent young and the childishly senescent rocking every which ways in the last dusky light. Surely the globes could have been switched on by now so that people shouldn't have to congregate in that arid, airless, dead lobby? Acker went round the side of the building toward the pallid rocky garden they called a patio. No one was there, if you didn't count Seymour that loutish children's waiter; and Seymour, Acker noticed, was, as usual, sitting and eating, on either knee a full napkin spread out, and the slit-eyed buffoon transferring bones—chickenbones, chopbones, fishbones—from the one to the other as he stripped them. Also, there was a gallon can by his foot, from which Acker saw him extract half a dripping peach with his fingers. What a greedy thing! It occurred to him that that sort of gallon can was an item Seymour rightfully should have no access to, but then, it was customary for the children's waiters to eat as their per-

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quisite whatever remained, and likely the cook had given that pesky, pimply boob the last can in order to drive him away. Without speaking or glancing at him further, Acker went by avoiding. Had he the stomach to look more closely, he would have seen such a picnic laid out that he might have been disturbed in quite a different way from that caused him by the merely obnoxious sight of this young glutton at work. But Acker's virtue was also his failing: he had room in his mind for only one thought at a time. So he kept on to the side entrance, where he quickened his climb up the shaky stairs because he heard even over the loud and painful clatter of the rented Saturday night *cha cha cha* band with its absurd cowbells and maracas and woodblocks and bongo-bongoes, the grunting voice of Gruber, and apprehended him vaguely as a kind of obscene boar whom he had had to track to his lair.

Parting the bead curtains of the portal to the Cubana Casbah Cabaret, as it was now named, he paused. The "younger people," the "fast set," a gang of long-married couples, were already, and so soon after dinner, flinging about the tiny floor in what they termed dancing, or else sitting around soaking up the sauce. All week these skinny women laid like mummies on the beach, cigarettes stuck in their greasy faces and oily white cotton swabs over their eyes, ignoring their children and waiting for the tired husbands who came out on the weekend to visit with them. Also there were the singles, old maids of both sexes, these balding and those graying, these sedentary and those shapeless, busy hunting each other up and down and all over the bar. Well, it was a hotel. Through this hoop-dydo and frenzy, Acker could see him down at the far end of the bar, where he sat fat-assed in fancy white linen pants on a chromium stool. A sport shirt printed with orchids and flamingoes loosely covered the vast, boiled pulp of his upper body, from which stuck two short borschtpink woolly arms: in one mush mitt, the big cigar, in the other the familiar tumbler of scotch. Dark aviator's sunglasses obscured the terrible eyes of that buttered, smouldering visage. Acker waited until Gruber saw him and snapped his fingers summoning him; then he came forward through this milling and jangling foretaste of hell which already sufficed to jar his satisfaction over his recent feat of stewardship to incomprehensibly scattered bits.

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"Sit down, Mr. Steward. Take the load off." Gruber dropped his arm across Mr. Acker's shoulders, and he stiffened. "Sit down, sit down, I said." Acker sat. "You got your envelope today, didn't you? How come I never see you spend some of that stuffed cabbage in my little joint here? What's the matter, they got better booze somewhere else, or momma says no?"

Not exactly the most tactful, was it? First of all, it was none of his business one way or the other what he did or did not do, and second place . . . but was it a hint or maybe an order? If so, he couldn't be told where to go after working hours and how to spend his hardearned money. Well, but what was this, a company town? Moreover, what did Gruber think he could do to him if he chose *not* to come in here? He had his season contract; so he couldn't be canned without showing cause, which *not drinking* definitely wasn't. Acker answered with what he thought quiet, candid self-respect: "Mr. Gruber, you know very well I have an apartment and wife I can go home to when I finish my time here."

"Yeah yeah, Acker. Dump it somewhere else. Me too. But that means you can't socialize at the bar once in a while? All my employees are permitted to take a drink here. I even like them to. Maybe not for each and every on Saturday night, but you're on the executive staff here. I want you to feel free, because you're welcome to. So, what do you like?"

"Thank you, but nothing just now."

"Don't talk like a child, please."

"Well, let's say a glass of ginger ale is all."

"Hey Salvatore. Bring Mr. Acker some ginger ale. Make it with the Haig & Haig—Pinch Bottle!"

"Mr. Gruber, thank you, but I don't think I want—"

"Salvatore, make it a double, eh? Say, Sal, I want you to meet the man who has been my steward here, believe it or not, seven weeks already. I bet you don't even know him. Sal, meet Sol; Solly, Sally." Gruber coughed up a dirty chuckle.

"Pleased," Mr. Acker said. "But it's Solomon. Nobody *ever* calls me Solly." And, not considering what he might be bringing on himself, he took a long swallow from his glass.

"That's better, Solly," Gruber said, and clapped his back. "Now, what's the story: are you in or are you out?"

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Acker smiled a little for the first time today. "We're all set. Don't worry. I have trucks on the way already." He glanced sideways at Gruber to see was he pleased. Gruber seemed not to have heard; or not to care very much. He merely grunted in his throat and held his glass out to the bartender. Ingrate! Some manager—he takes a miracle for granted! What was the use: the man was a bully, period. Acker drained his glass. All right, he had to take the chance and drop a hint. "Besides, I have done a little investigating around here tonight. And . . . I think . . . I have found . . . something. . . ."

Gruber swivelled from the bar to face him, hauled up a golden lighter and puffed his green cigar to life. The barman took Acker's glass from him, poured it half full of whiskey, added a dollop of soda, replaced it just as unobtrusively into his hands. Gruber snapped his lighter shut, rapped on the bar a few times in a gesture reminiscent of the split-second meditation of the higher military, and stuffed it back into a pants pocket too full of thigh; then he glared, wearily it might have been, perhaps only savagely bored, through his sunglasses. "Okay, Acker. Don't waste my time with guessing games. Spill. What *is* going on around here?"

"What's going on? What isn't? And furthermore, Mr. Julius Gruber, it's possible you could know as much as I do, if not more, eh?" Acker was surprised to hear his own voice delivering this bold and cool suggestion. He knew he would live to regret it, and began immediately.

"I know *more* than you think, Acker. Morale around here is shot. Service is going to pieces. I can feel it in my bones: that's why I am who I am. From where I sit, the whole works is right under my nose, see? And let me tell you, mister, I don't like it one bit. If you want to know, the entire staff stinks like bad meat to me. There's five more full weeks to this season. I should be going strong in the black. The place is booked up till Labor Day. They never had it so hot in the city. But the way things are falling, I can't see to make it, because I take a look at the books and it's pouring out through a hole as big as the Lincoln Tunnel. How the *hell* is that possible? Because, Acker, *from your department alone I stand to lose everything!* Rivers, oceans of food! Last week, the meat almost two tons short. Canned goods, sardines and herrings and tunas and

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salmons that run two arms and a leg, fruits, apricots, peaches, pears, maraschinos even, and oranges and pineapple and melons that cost a small fortune just to look at the crates. Even dairy, juice and milk and cream! Where *is* that tapeworm? Am I running a *mad*-house here? I say it has got to stop this very night, or else I am going to see to it, personally!" He smashed his clenched fist down on the bartop so hard that Acker's breath jumped down his throat with fright. What was the matter with Gruber? Didn't he know the help steals you blind, no matter what? even right under the unwinking eyes of a zealot like Mrs. Jewett? All right, it was bad; but not so bad as he made it. Consequently, Acker tried to return a soft answer to the anger he had roused. "Well, Mr. Gruber, not so much as that, I would say."

"Oh, *you* would say? A thousand dollars of inventory a week is not so bad?"

Acker smiled forgivingly, emboldened by his drinks, and said in a liquorish murmur that he was again instanteously sorry for, "Let's not exaggerate, Gruber. It's not a thousand. Even five hundred would be good, too."

"What? Your five hundred, Acker, or mine? A fiver not enough! Why, man, in the Army I could prosecute you, even if you were a fellow officer, for a knife, a fork, a spoon—let alone a helmet or a pair of pants! And I could make you, *you,* Acker, personally responsible to see to it that even the top of the mayonnaise jar is screwed on just so and according to the book. Understand? Just so, or else!"

Acker didn't reply. Which set the man off even worse. "I tell you what, Acker. I will give you till tomorrow morning to find out the story. Okay? Then I get Pinkerton. You know what it means if he comes down? All right! If I was you, I'd poke in and out and spot who's in charge of this racket, and drop me the word. And if I was you, Acker, I wouldn't tear up no contracts tonight. Because if you turn around next thing and tell me you don't want this job, I'll know who to look for. Exactly! You wouldn't be feeling so fresh-mouth and talky. That's all."

Under the sheer force of such a threat, Acker shrunk into himself. It was as though he sat paralyzed at a table and watched some stupid busboy's overstacked tray of dirty dishes begin tipping over

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right above him. Here he had been sweating bitter lemons to pull this gross man out of a tight spot, and he as good as promised to make him into a criminal. Such injustice! When it could be anybody here, even Gruber; anybody, but not Acker, *that* he knew, and he knew Gruber knew it too. So what could he say to the man after this?

"I see you get my point, Acker. Okay, finish that glass and start your manhunt."

"But why should I be—?"

Gruber bashed his fist down again, and looking away into the deep, smoky, blue mirror, but not at him in it, sliced his hand across his bag of chins and growled more hoarsely: "No more, you hear! I'm up to here, Acker! So don't even think of what you might want to say. This is the end of this particular conversation: the interview is closed. My Cabaret is open till three. I want to see you in here again only when you come and say you're finished with your assignment. Otherwise . . . *phhhtt!* Go on, get the hell out!"

As best he could, Acker got.

There was no one in the lobby. The air from the sea had actually come into palpable existence: it flowed, sluggish and warm, inflating slightly the heavy blue draperies that even at midday created a byzantinish gloom in the Metropole's entrance, and it seemed to have washed away the mass of congested guests on its slow current. Beyond the unattended desk, Acker stopped in the murky corridor under the main staircase. He tried to collect and contain the fright that was giving him shivers, as if his skin were hiccoughing. Then he could not tell what it was, whether he was suddenly hungry or nauseated. He half-leaned, half-fell back against the knobbly and carved black oak chair with the broken-springed, embroidered seat that guarded the foot of the stair, and seated in which could always be seen either the corrupt bell-captain deciphering his racing form or the elevator boy dozing between rush hours to and from the beach. His palms pressed themselves together hard in his lap. All right, Acker: think, think, think! Now what is to be done? So, he had to resume his search? The idea of what he wanted nagged at him like a ringing tone in the ears through the gradually swelling drone of the waves of fatigue and strain and confusion that had begun to buffet his spirit. But he

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found he could not think. At first he saw before him a whirling lion-rampant; his lion, Leo, which his wife repeatedly assured him was the sign of protection in July, but then it dwindled, as though sucked down a drain, and its place was immediately possessed by Gruber's terrific sweating head, the sunglasses obscuring those bleary, fuming eyes, that enormous mouth with its stained teeth and the purple swollen tongue that lapped the wet cigar protruding from it permanently. This image remained floating on the turbulent black water of his mind, filling up the narrow space behind his eyelids. Acker groaned low and put his hands to his poor skull, pushing the soft heels of his palms against his empty, wretched temples. What to do, what to do? Unable to stir foot or arm or head, Mr. Acker, slumped on the thronelike chair, looked like a man asleep, though actually he was awake, praying wordlessly, his disordered and feverish brain helpless in the rigor of the situation, like a trussed pullet flung into a corner and waiting brighteyed for the slaughterer's ritual knife, the knife so sharp and swift it is never even felt.

In the blackness to his left, the door to the basement steps opened and shut again with a tiny click. Someone flitted by and went up the stairs behind him. The air in the wake of this shadow seemed tinged with ammonia, like the memory of the odor of a moist-muzzled calf he had hugged once as a child in a green country, long long ago. He did not move. In a little while, the door opened again and shut. He lifted his lids just a crack and discerned white lowheeled shoes that appeared to glimmer against the blotchy maroon ground of this moldy-smelling Mohawk Imperial Persian carpeting: in the shoes, sharpboned and tauttendoned ankles, blackskinned, stepped springily by: he heard the lightness of their passing, listened to their muffled pattering up the stairs: he sniffed, and thought he apprehended the scent of newbaked rye bread, weakly sour yet sweet, and what he could have believed easily to be the breath of strong red wine. Still he did not move. But when shortly afterward the same door opened and closed with what was surely unusually mysterious deliberation, and he saw two pairs of shoes go by him on tiptoe, again one white with darkskinned female legs in them, the other a pair of scuffed black men's shoes, and listened to them skipping secretly up the staircase, and

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got a bitter whiff of stale smoke as of wet ashes, Mr. Acker awoke, feeling as if he had been lightly struck, and knew himself resurrected back into himself. For who knows how long, he had utterly lost track of time. His brain was working now, and he thought, Yes, the manner in which all those feet had moved was suspicious. Yes, very much so! On the other hand, to be absolutely just, it also occurred to him that he could simply interpret their stealth as natural, because although the help well knew they should never use the main stairs, at the Metropole they usually did in the off-hours; yet especially they shouldn't when a member of the top staff like himself was there, although, again, strictly speaking, Saturday evening he did not belong in the lobby in his workclothes either. So, where was he now, with all this anxious guessing and unguessing to and fro? Nevertheless, Acker began to climb the stairs, as softly as he was able, feeling and peering, like an ecstatic diver gone far beyond his limit, up, up, up into what seemed chiaroscuro depths and deeps—and commenting bitterly to himself that what would have been a flagrant violation of safety in another place, was in the Metropole, atmosphere, character, quality even!

The second floor was empty, forward and back. So was the third. Breathing hard in his absorption, and from the attitude of caution he had assumed, Acker continued more slowly to the fourth. He had heard whispering. He stuck his weak chin, level with the top step, around the landing. Down the hall, the linen closet's door was ajar, and the lightbulb in it shed a soft zone over two forms which were close together and appeared to him at first to be scuffling. Concentrating, breathless, Acker watched. It was one of the Negro girls, the maid, Marie, whom they called Bright Eyes because of her enormous, longlashed black eyes, emphasized by prominent, slanted cheekbones, and because her eyes always seemed to be satirically laughing, and one of the busboys. Acker suddenly realized that they were embracing, rocking back and forth into and out of the closet, as if they were dancing. The girl's arms stood out black against the boy's white jacket: Acker watched with fascination as one of the hands slipped down his back, walking like a crab, and bit the boy in the seat of his pants. Acker heard them laughing together: the boy let go to seize her hand, and she pushed him away. Then he shoved her back into the closet again, and in a few

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moments they came tumbling out, clean towels raining with them. The girl muttered, and dropped to her knees. The boy bent too, butted her in her rear so that she sprawled, and fled down the corridor. Acker had to wait while she retrieved her goods, folded and put them back, buttoned up the white uniform and disappeared after the boy in her shambling girl's run. Monkeybusiness, he said to himself, *some* monkeybusiness!

When he judged they should have settled down wherever it was they had gone, he resumed more painfully crouched. The fifth floor was empty, except when the elevator rattled open and ejected two crones in their flowered silk, who helped each other to their rooms, where they fussed, interminably, with the locks. All right, he promised, we will now see precisely what is doing here, heh? On hands and knees, he ascended to the sixth floor; at the top he moved to the landing with what seemed even to him infinitely wearying and ridiculously unnecessary effort, though he made it for the sake of the form, and sat there on the floor in the angle, leaning over just enough to get a view of the hallway.

The elevator opened and two waitresses came out and walked right towards him. He drew back. They went up the stairs to the attic, their feet tramping hollow and measured, exhausted, on the bare wooden steps that climbed to the seventh floor. In a minute the elevator returned. Two busboys came out. Acker said to himself with heavy irony, Such innocents! Such angels! We will see what we will see! Acker watched, and saw something that opened his eyes indeed. They had gone stealthily into the linen closet for a moment; now they came out, each with gallon cans under their arms—Acker's cans! Unmistakably! They slithered down the hall at him and bounded thundering up over his head. He had a hunch and held himself back, waiting and saying over and over, Well well well! and Aha! and, Oho! In a few minutes, the pantomime was repeated when another pair of busboys were brought up, and they darted into the linen closet and also came out loaded down with canned goods: one had even taken off his uniform jacket, put the sleeves into the pockets and stuffed them with No. 2 cans; the other carried his white coat like a sack, and it was filled full with oranges and grapefruits and whatnot! My god in heaven, Acker moaned to himself, what have they got in there? In the next ten minutes, four

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more boys came up from the dining room and visited that depot; moreover, they all made trips down to reload. Acker stayed where he was, stupefied, and tried to estimate his loss if such a quantity of provisions was heisted every day. But the question, the paramount inquiry, was: *Where* did it come from? *When* did it? And *how?* He looked at his watch; it read eleven.

Suddenly he was aware of a faint, far-off sound of revelry in the night. It came to him not from any place below, and not exactly from the stairway above—the firedoor had been banged shut up there—but out of the air, as it were, floating down from the blurred multitudes of stars he could distinguish high in the dark universe out of the fire-escape door open behind him: a kind of muzzy singing over bursts of loud talk, and hoots and howls and yelps of laughter mixed up with the intermittent strains of music that you heard when a radio abandoned in some room or other played aimlessly shrill and unheeded by itself. He listened for a minute, confounded by the noise of this unplaceable party: it was like the mockery of a dream that you were in heaven, among the luminous, milky hosts of the skies, and hearing the happiness all about you, and being unable to see anything at all. Recovering his attention, he decided he had delayed much too long, and attempted to rise to an officially important position. But his legs failed him, and he dropped; the left one was entirely numb, the right tingled like an alarm clock. He sat there stretching them and cursing them under his thoughts and massaging them until they grew quiet, meanwhile feeling a peculiarly acrid and constricted desperation of mood welling up in him out of his stomach, or his chest—he wasn't sure which.

When he could get up, he marched directly to the linen closet. It was not even locked: already a sign of fundamental disorder. Mrs. Jewett would have bitten her bloodless lip to come on this! He walked in and pulled the cord. The light revealed nothing unusual: the shelves held clean linen, all quite neatly stacked and ticketed; the floor was swept; the empty water pitchers and glasses, and things like the hotel's thin cakes of Ivory and the girls' mops and brooms and dustcloths and so forth—everything tidy. His questing eyes flickered, then found his desire; almost hidden in a recess in the back corner, the unpainted little door to the dumb-

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waiter. He reached out and tore at it in an excess of passion. The shaft was empty, the ropes still. Well, after all, what else should he have expected? He had to admit frankly he didn't know, but he could guess. Tugging at the pull rope, Acker brought this too-handy means of conveyance up—and found that, for him, the dumbwaiter had no story to tell: he saw nothing but the bare old box. Despite this disappointment, Acker was convinced that at some time very recently it had contained all his troubles. And would again, tomorrow night perhaps, though it would be of no use to him to be able to demonstrate that fact to anyone, for by then Mr. Pinkerton would have tied him to it, with the goods together. What he badly needed, right now, more than a glass of something to quench his thirst, more even than a couple of his anacins and a cold shower, was proof—proof, proof, *proof*! And he knew just where to get what he needed. Closing the dumbwaiter up carefully, as if it could make any difference, Acker pulled the light cord and backed out of the closet and started right for the attic—without even pausing to prepare his imagination to cope with what he thought he was sure to find.

He gained the topmost floor with a celerity he had not believed himself anymore capable of tonight. Throwing open the firedoor, Acker walked into an atmosphere so very hot and dry that it smote his face like the blast from a furnace, and confronted a scene he could not believe quite real. Not in all his experience, not in thirty years in hotels, he said to himself out loud, had he ever seen, let alone heard of, such a thing! He stood at the head of the attic hall, which ran the whole length of the Metropole's seventh floor. It was an uncomfortably high-ceilinged, sharp-pitched passage that might have been a nave designed in a superfluous moment of fancy, for it never could have been intended for any serious architectural use. Here and there the ancient plaster had dropped off the walls, where great patches of broken lathing were left bare. Nothing but rats' nests in there. Who knew how long ago it had last been whitewashed? Down its wretchedly illuminated length were the help's low little rooms, on both aisles, looking much like cells because they had no doors. And ranged along both sides of this fake basilica, as far as he could see clearly, which was not more than half way down, were dozens and dozens of gallon tin cans—

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the very cans which had once contained his vegetables and his fruits, and if not his, the steward's before him. Now they were empty, but filled with old refuse and rubbish; beer, wine, whiskey bottles, uncountable cigarette butts and so much ash, cosmetic bottles and soiled crumpled tissues and broken curlers and hair nets, rags of clothing and silk stockings and torn underthings like corsets, garters, braces and bands of elastic cotton, pads, straps, supports, broken shoes, wrinkled old toothpaste tubes, newspapers . . . just everything that comes out of bedrooms, and the worst of everything. Acker shut his eyes, shook his head in grief, and opened them again. The illusion, preposterous as it was, persisted: in and out of the tiny rooms up and down this attic way people were scuttling, dancing, leaping, cavorting back and forth in their underwear, or even, it seemed, less: busboys, chambermaids, waitresses—young and older, white and colored, Gentile and Jew. It might have been the entire dining room staff and all the maids, as far as he knew. He flung his arms up, as if to command silence, and the weighted ironclad door clanged shut behind him. No one paid any atention: the orgy went on uninterrupted. Acker leaned back against the door, and considered. He had not anticipated anything like this; this was something else! Had everything turned upside down and inside out? This was like the end of the world!

But Acker girded himself and went forward into chaos. Besides, having come so far so late, and by a way so much against his will and bias—creeping and peeping, spying and chasing—from that silent still office of his in the cool cellar down there in the earth, there was no way back for him. Most especially, he told himself to proceed because he believed he had sufficiently witnessed already the evidence of misdemeanor and misappropriation and malfeasance for which he had been seeking. Now he wanted the source. Dark, the first room to the left: a portable radio, fluorescent on the sill of the uncurtained window, blared at him, *Ma-ha-hambo, Corazon! Ma-ha-hambo, Cha Cha Cha!* and as he passed he saw two cigarette coals pulse red and flare near the floor. The next room on his right was lit up like day. He halted outside it. Tilly, wearing nothing more than an old, tattered, cotton housecoat, her bloody hair down in braids, one of her long Russian cigarettes in the corner of her mouth, stood at an ironing board, pressing her

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uniform: her crooked, gnarled, blueveined feet seemed marmoreal against the bare wood floor; Riva, her roommate, slack-breasted, yellow-skinned, lay comatose in a halfslip on her pallet—staring blankly at the cracked ceiling—how Acker hated that greystriped ticking and broken-springed cot. He waited; when Tilly looked up at him he gestured at the noise of the hall, as if to say, *What's this?* and she glared back at him, her tired face falling easily into a grimace of cynical disgust, and shrugged, as if to reply, *What do you think?* Acker went on.

He did not know how he ever managed to reach the end of the corridor; to these people who had made it a gauntlet for his undone sensibility, it was as if he were a transient, fluttering shadow passing among them, a schlemiel who had somehow, somewhere, lost his body. They jeered at him, bumped into him on purpose, and gave him fierce, uninviting stares which said all too clearly, *Who asked you?* or else, worse, ignored him altogether when he stopped at a room and stared into it like a tourist wandering by mistake through a gallery of lewd exhibitions. Lights went off and on during his long progress, bottles were opened, ice cubes rattled into glasses; four or five other radios played on different stations, and people behaved as they would at the end of a party, rather, a dozen parties. Acker was relieved to discover that he was in no worse condition at the end of his journey than before. But wasn't *that,* he heard his voice inside him imploring, about as bad as one can possibly stand?

The end of the hall was dim, lit by an ochreous, fly-specked bulb, perhaps an old ten watts. Acker put his hand out gingerly, and stroked the rough boards nailed over what had been the windows of a recessed moorish arch. Shaggy, splintery, the reality of this cursed wood, that he could touch at least, steadied him. The last room there was dark as a tomb; he heard a girl's spluttering, and then her giggles, and also a warm female laugh come from it. Too strong a light flicked on. A male voice called, "Say, Mr. Acker, is that you?" He turned himself around and went unwillingly to the painful light. He was much too upset to put this movement into words, but he knew obscurely and with no reason that here was the approach to the facts, truth, goal, call it what you want, towards which he had been striving through this tumultuous night.

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He blinked at his watch. Already practically twelve. Three people were in this miserable little room. To one side of it, Davie the head busboy reclined in a swaybottomed narrow bed; behind him and against the wall lay that girl, Bright Eyes. They were naked, yes, but at least they had covered themselves up to their bellies with the grimy sheet. Her satin-black breasts, Acker saw at once, were very long and thin, and tipped by granular pink nipples; her teeth shone so white at him, and her eyes were so impudently wide with laughter—why, why was that? Next to her the boy was bony and much too pale. A mess of clothes and shoes were flung beside the bed. Acker saw also a pail of ice with three wine bottles in it, and a newly-opened gallon can of his superior Bartlett pears. The other bed was occupied by a very stout tan woman in a transparent nightgown; Acker recognized in her the children's matron, Nurse they called her; and how much younger she seemed in the flesh; that is, Acker amended his observation, out of uniform. The woman lay propped on her side in a luxuriant attitude, sipping from a glass of wine and smoking.

"What's going on here?" Acker said, as if he had just awakened.

"Come in, come in, Mr. Acker," the young man said.

"Davie, I'm asking a question. I want an answer." His voice bobbled with the effort to sound peremptory. But he had not the strength.

"Aah, come in and sit down. What's the big hurry? It's been a hard week. How about it, eh?" Davie leaned down towards the floor for a cigarette, and lit up while still draped three quarters out of the bed.

"Well, I'm waiting!"

"That's all right, Mr. Acker, sir, you just come on in now, and sit yourself down easy. You look, well—not so good," the big tan lady said in a mellow voice. And she patted the small space left on the edge of her mattress, just in front of her smooth, weighted belly, with its deep navel. "Come on now, you hear me?"

"Davie," he said once more, his will slackening, "Davie, I did not come up here for a good time. I'm on business, you hear me? I demand an answer from you. Better talk and explain a few things. Because it's up to you. Because you're the head busboy. So let's get it over with."

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"See, you crazy thing?" Davie said over his shoulder to the girl, "I told you once, and I told you again: *I* give the orders! Because I'm head busboy, see! That's one *you* owe." He laughed and slid his arm under the sheet. The girl reacted by fastening her teeth in his shoulder. He jabbed his elbow into her breast, and she subsided. He leered at Acker, confidentially, and said, "How about that, eh?" Acker stamped his foot, and Davie changed his expression, "Okay, have it your way. Whatever you want, Mr. Acker. I'm listening. But first sit down, huh? Please? You make me nervous the way you look. Like a dead man."

If Acker had thought that he did not quite know what he wanted to say when he first laid eyes on this trio, he was worse off as soon as he gave in and sat down, in the only place he could. Immediately, he felt the woman's strong, somnolent stomach pressed warm against the small of his back: the misery which had stiffened his spine and sustained him thus far became as water, as nothing. The boy dragged at his cigarette and said, surely, Acker thought, laughing in his heart at him, "Better? Now, sir, you just have a little to drink, you just take it a little easy for a minute, you'll be all right."

Reassuringly, Nurse patted his knee, then she poured and reached him a full chill glass from her bottle of purplish-black wine and he—fool, fool that he knew he was—drank it. So, what difference could it make? he answered himself. He had finally found what he wanted. She said, "Mr. Acker, you know something? I an immigrant too. I come across water to these States here."

"Really?" he said. "I don't follow."

"I'm not like these lowdown, no-class Americans here, like that girl across the way there—all right, you black thing, you can laugh, you don't know any better!" she scolded the girl. "You see, I was born in Jamaica. And I been educated too; trained for a nurse. My first husband, poor man, he was a lawyer, 'fore God, and he was West Indian man, Trinidad. You know?"

"Really?" he said. "That's nice."

"So you don't have to be afraid with me, Mr. Acker," she concluded soothingly, with a logic that baffled him as to its purpose, "and it will be all right, because we understand better than those poor things, the ignorant way they been brought up over here." She put that square, strong hand on his knee again.

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Mr. Acker tried to concentrate, tried to make himself clear. He felt he knew all he needed to know, and need but speak to be understood. "Davie, this is it, now. Important. I want you to listen to me. You're a nice boy, I like you, the way you handle yourself downstairs: no mess, no bossiness. I don't want you to go in over your head. It's a hard world, I tell you. I know, it doesn't forgive. You start off the wrong way, they'll never let you forget it. So stay out of trouble."

"Wait a minute, Mr. Acker, wait just a minute. Why the speech? It's too hot, and we're all tired out around here. Now what's the matter—can't we have a party? Who's bothered?"

"Party? What's the party got to do with it? Who knows what you kids are up to nowadays, anyway, and who cares? If I had a kid, I wouldn't be able to look him in the face: after these goings on tonight I have seen enough to make me ashamed forever. Awful. But I'm not your father and you're not my son and it's not my business. I just don't want trouble here. What's more, there's going to be plenty, you'll see!" He felt tears of certainty and sorrow filling him. The Nurse's hand was between his shoulders, smoothing his back: he wanted her to stop, it was making him groggy; but he did nothing. "Furthermore, guilty or not guilty, someone always has to be blamed for it. And the man in charge is the best choice to get it: it can't be helped. That's the way the world gets run. So, as head busboy, you will have to bear the responsibility, let me warn you, for what others may have done."

"Say, what's the matter with you, Mr. Acker? I'm just having a good time like everybody else. What do you pick on me for? Why me, out of all the crowds of fellas you seen all your life?"

"You want to know, eh? You really want to know? All right, you will!" Acker pointed to the can of pears. "What do you call this? Where, may I ask you, does this come from?"

"Oh, hell, so we picked up a can of fruit for the night. What's the big deal? Once in a while you take something. So what?"

"One can? Only one can, you say? Once in a while? What's about that collection, that carload of stuff up and down this hall? Am I a blind man? Do you take me for a blind man, *and* a fool?"

"How should I know, for god's sake! Anna, Marie, tell him how long that stuff's been there, for god's sake! This crew came in

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this goddamned dump a month and a half ago, and he thinks we did all that. Pops, that's one hell of a clever idea!"

"Try and tell me you didn't. Say I'm the judge. You just try telling it to me you didn't!" Acker sneered with worldly sarcasm. "Well? You think anyone old enough to be your father must be deaf dumb and blind, don't you? Well, some might be. I wouldn't know about that. But here, I'm the steward, and it's my business to know what goes on in the food department. So don't you think I don't. All right, I told myself, a little lifting up here and there, you can't blame the kids; it's natural, considering the way they feed them. A piece of fruit, a loaf of bread, a glass of milk—you're entitled to it, *if* the headwaiter don't catch you, and *if* the cooks don't catch you, and *if* I don't. But—God in heaven should only be my witness—twenty, thirty *cases* of gallon cans! Besides everything else in the house! Some nerve you and your gang has got."

"Say, Mr. Acker. . . ."

"Now don't make me angry, Davie. Because I've had it, I'm full up to here—and you better believe it!"

"But listen . . ."

"I thought you were a nice boy, Davie. At least *you,* I could count on *you,* the head busboy, to be responsible, mature, to maintain a little order, to keep the boys from running wild. But this!"

"Listen, Mr. Acker. . . ."

"No! You listen to me!" Acker screamed, and he would have jumped up, but the woman pulled him back against her, and wrapped her great comfortable arms about his waist. Nevertheless he continued on a shrill rising pitch, "You listen to me. I hereby give you the last warning, you hear? It has got to stop! I wanted to protect you, Davie, because you're a poor boy. And a better boy, I thought. And poor boys don't have a chance, and the law don't care for better boys either. If I was to speak what I saw going on up here tonight—who knows what they would do to you? The entire god-forsaken boom would fall on you!"

"But. . . ."

"But me no buts, but shut up I say! You—liar! thief! lecher! Who can tell how bad you are! If you're like this now, god knows what you'll be ten years from today. So answer me what you know: *what happened to the meat?* That's what I want to know. Because

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you can't eat raw meat. Tonight it's not too late to speak. But tomorrow you will be sorry, believe you me! Well?"

Davie looked at him blankly. Some cool cucumber that boy was! Pickled in vinegar! And then the girl, Marie, burst into a steady jag of laughing, that silly giggling of hers that seemed to have no relevance to the world of this particular instance, as proved by the way she stopped the minute the boy jogged her.

"Will you just wait one second, Mr. Acker? I heard you out long enough. So let's not kid around. You come in here where you don't belong, where people are having a good time. You start in yelling at me for picking up a can of your rotten pears. What is this crazy story about meat now?"

"Davie, your last chance. I don't know how many hundred pounds of fresh beef we lost around here in seven weeks, but this I *can* tell you: tomorrow the detective comes down! Once he's here on the premises, it will be too late—for everybody."

The boy stubbed his cigarette out on the dresser top next to his head, and looking right at him, said, cold and level, with a voice like a smack in the face, "All right, Mr. Solomon Acker, that's enough crap from you. You think you know so much! A couple cans of fruit, a pineapple, an orange, maybe a bottle of milk—okay? If you're such a goddam cheap little punky steward for your lord and master that son of a bitch Gruber that you have to sit and count over a mountain of stock every night, you just try proving it. Right, girls? Look at this little bastard, he comes sneaking around after his five dollars worth of goods any decent place would *give* the help once in a while. Then he says he'll call in a detective, a detective yet, for god's sake! because everybody's having fun Saturday night. That's really the best, that's holy! Go on, call the detective down, see what you get!"

Acker reiterated, feeling as if he was being gagged by a slimy dishcloth, feeling as if the earth were falling away, "The meat! The meat! What about the meat! What happened to all my choice meat? I want to know how you did it!"

"What meat? Who knows where your meat is? Don't be crazy, Acker. Meat, he says!"

Acker sought again to rise. He would have throttled the boy lying there at ease with that derisive naked black female. He would have throttled her too. He tried to speak out but could not. The

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nurse's bulky arms caught him, held him to her, enveloped him, pulled him down. He gave up the useless struggle to force the truth: he turned and wept upon her good and welcome breasts. "That's all right, honey," he heard her say, "That's all right. You just going to stay here with Anna for a while, and it will be all right, you know? I understand, I do, so you just hold onto me good like this. No use fighting them stones."

And then, and then he thought he heard her whispering, but to whom? And she seemed to be supporting him. They were going somewhere and she was saying, "The man isn't used to the heat, you see. Like my second husband, poor man. And then he took a little wine, too, you see. And . . ." And then he heard a door bang; and another. Then the soft voice of the elevator boy singing. "There, there . . ." It was very dark and cool all of a sudden. A hand had been shaking him violently. He opened his eyes. And then he discovered that he was sitting; he felt an awful cramp in his neck. He was back in the chair in the lobby of the Metropole. He could smell rain, and the salt wind from the sea, much harder now, blowing into the deserted lobby . . . and he smelled the special cigar, too. It was Gruber who stood over him. Gruber. "So, Acker. This is how you do your detective work?"

From the desk he heard sniggering. "All right," Gruber said over him condescendingly, "I'll take care of everything. Why don't you go home to the old lady, Acker? She must be up waiting for you, eh? You don't smell so good to me; but it could be worse. Stanley, this is my steward, Acker. You know him? Acker, Stanley, my night man." Stanley the nightclerk sniggered again: the very same idiot-sounding laugh as before.

Without looking about, and to no one in particular, Acker said, "My name is *not* Solly." Then he got up, swaying on his queered legs. He started for the cool wet air and the thrashing darkness that he heard waiting for him outside the Metropole, renewed always, from one year to the next, like time. He lifted his wrist: his watch read half-past three. It was too late. It was already tomorrow. The detective had surely been called down to find out. And he would come. And he would surely settle matters here, though not for him.

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BOOKS

MORALS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

FREUD: THE MIND OF THE MORALIST. By Philip Rieff. Viking. $6.00.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND MORAL VALUES. By Heinz Hartmann. International Universities Press. $3.00.

Can one derive an ethic from a psychology and its psychotherapeutic method? Freud himself maintained the physician's and scientist's neutrality on problems of moral conduct, while conducting his private life according to his own strict moral code. There is no contradiction here, if we understand that moral neutrality is the necessary condition for scientific investigation and is not the condition for governing behavior or instinctual drives. Freud specifically disclaimed the use of psychoanalysis as a guide to the right conduct of life. And yet Philip Rieff is right when he claims that nonetheless there are intellectual and moral implications in the writings of Freud. Ideas that have played a crucial role in the moral revolution of our time, though neutral in the scientific sense, have lost moral neutrality upon challenging established beliefs and altering man's image of himself.

Ironically many of the cultural changes which psychoanalysis produced were not, strictly speaking, derived from psychoanalytic theory or therapy but were magnificent errors in interpretation, ideas that lost their identities while traveling. Repression, for example, first introduced by Freud in 1895 as a factor in neurosis, emerged later in the popular culture as a psychic evil, the deterrent to health, happiness and successful art. Between 1900 and 1905 Freud began to see that the mechanism that he had isolated in hysteria was a normal and indispensable component of psychic functioning, that repression was not in itself pathological. From approximately 1905 until the present a correct statement of Freud's views on repression would include these two points: (1) repression

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is not, in itself, pathological; (2) it is not repression *qua* repression that creates neurosis but *unsuccessful* repression. When it breaks down and an intolerable wish threatens to break through into consciousness a conflict will arise that may initiate a neurosis. There is nothing, then, in this view (which pre-dates the popularization of psychoanalytic ideas) that recommends the theory to those who seek health through the casting off of moral restraints or to those who try to rear healthy children by avoiding "repressions." The error in transmission of the idea in popular culture certainly influenced conduct in many spheres. Changes in child-rearing methods and the sexual morality of adults are attributable, at least in part, to the popular belief that repression is a danger to psychic health. In such instances new standards for conduct claim the authority of psychoanalysis, though the influential idea is a distortion of the scientific concept.

It is not an easy job to establish the links between Freud's ideas and their product in social behavior, attitudes and the self-image of modern man. Philip Rieff is a sociologist who brings to this study a considerable erudition and a discerning eye for forms and patterns in behavior. He describes a new moral type that has emerged in the past half-century, the product of diverse historical and socio-economic tendencies, one that needed a psychological rationale for its introversion of interest and found it in Freudian psychology. The new moral type Rieff calls "psychological man." He emerges quite convincingly from Mr. Rieff's examination. But the connections between the modern type, and the influential psychoanalytic ideas that have formed him are not so convincing, and here Mr. Rieff encounters difficulties.

Psychological man is described by Rieff as the dominant moral type of our time, "specially adapted to endure his own period: the trained egoist, the private man, who turns away from the arenas of public failure to re-examine himself and his own emotions." Rieff identifies a new kind of conscience, a reasoned, scrupulous examination of self and motive, one that is guided by the scientific ideal of neutrality and the Freudian "ethic of honesty," a conscience that measures good by personal health-values and substitutes reasoned self-judgments for guilt. Because moral aspirations may endanger his health-values, psychological man does not as-

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pire. Because social protest is for him only the externalization of an inner struggle with authority, psychological man looks inward for solutions. And if virtue is the civilized mask for base longings, the new morality is compelled to question the legitimacy of good.

The caricature obliges us to recognize a number of traits that are identifiable as modern and a considerable number of beliefs that claim the authority of psychoanalysis. Rieff himself, by examining the entire body of Freud's works, identifies him as the educator of psychological man. Psychological man appears as the personification of the ego, judiciously regulating the demands of the id and the demands of the superego. The moral neutrality of psychological man suggests the moral neutrality of the analyst and the analytic method, in which the patient is asked to suspend his critical attitude; and the reasoned morality of psychological man may be taken as the triumph of the therapeutic ideal in which the irrational dictates of the superego are overcome by rational thought processes. Above all, Freud discovered the tyranny of conscience and, in Rieff's view, made guilt a disease. "Freud," says Rieff, "can conceive of a person's feeling guilty not because he has been bad but because, as a result of his repressions, he is too moral. This is one source of his influence: his diagnosis that we are sick from our ideals and that the one practical remedy lies in an infusion from below."

A large part of Mr. Rieff's argument rests upon his erroneous conception of the superego. Rieff sees the superego as "imposed or superinduced on the real individual (ego)" which he understands to imply an alienation of "the social personality (superego) from the genuine self (ego)." Rieff appears to believe that the superego is almost entirely unconscious, which then leads him to say, "Implicitly Freud presumes that the decisions of conscience are invariably irrational; indeed conscience is defined as being—it is a powerful rhetorical affront—no less irrational than the instinctual id." Rieff speaks of "the ostensibly amoral knowledge of the ego." And later: "Against the rigid moralizing tyranny of conscience, Freud posed a flexible but highly limited administration by the rational ego. . . . Thus narrowly defined, reason makes a weak champion."

Now, of course, if conscience is irrational and the "amoral" ego is weak against its tyranny, the whole question of values, moral choice, and moral responsibility is thrown into confusion, and this

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is exactly what Rieff sees as the implications of Freudian psychology. And if guilt is the manifestation only of pathology, the place of guilt as a moral restraint can also be disputed.

In Freud's view the concept superego embraces both conscience and ideal self and is conceived as a permanent organization within the personality, an internalized moral system that may exert its influence without coercion from external forces. Part of the superego is unconscious. The superego is part of the ego; its values and standards of conduct are an integral part of the ego, and one can speak of the two institutions as merged for all practical purposes. It is only when conflict arises that a division between them can be observed. We cannot speak of the "amoral" knowledge of the ego, for the ego as properly defined is the possessor of moral knowledge and the executor of moral functions. The superego makes no decisions, "rational" or "irrational." Only the ego can make decisions, for it is the ego that judges, reasons and acts.

The sense of guilt, Freud says, is an expression of the tension between the demands of conscience and the actual attainments of the ego. In *The Ego and The Id, Civilization and Its Discontents* and in other works, he makes it very clear that he regards guilt feelings as normal and indispensable for the functioning of personality. The signal of guilt becomes a warning and usually an effective deterrent to conduct that is incompatible with moral standards. The experience of guilt feelings and self-criticism for failure to measure up to the ego-ideal provides the motive for modification of the personality. Freud differentiates between a "normal, conscious sense of guilt" and the guilt feelings encountered in neuroses, which arise from unconscious forces and derive their energy and their malignant character from an internal conflict that grows on secrecy and engages the ego's defensive measures to keep it from entering consciousness. In this way a neurotic patient may be burdened with intolerable guilt without knowing the reason for it. In such instances we have a disease of conscience, and the sense of guilt which normally serves as a guardian of internal moral laws is now given over to the disease to persecute the personality for unknown crimes.

Psychoanalysis treats the diseases of the superego, but it does not abolish the superego. The superego is an indestructible part of the ego. If it were possible to abolish it the entire structure of per-

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sonality would collapse. A successful psychoanalytic therapy strengthens the superego by partially freeing it from irrational forces. It restores guilt feelings to appropriate moral functions, making available a store of energy for constructive action bound in disease to magic acts of repentance, self-abasement and avoidance.

If there are any moral implications that can be derived from psychoanalytic therapy it might be said that a man who has achieved relative freedom from magic and the demands of the drives may have relative freedom to choose. But the question of moral choice cannot be dealt with apart from the question of moral imperatives, and here the relevance of psychoanalysis is important. Heinz Hartmann, probably the outstanding psychoanalytic theorist today, takes up the problem of psychoanalysis and moral values in his recent essay, written for a psychoanalytic audience. Psychoanalysis, he says, presents us with a psychology of moral behavior. Through Freud we have come to understand how moral imperatives are derived from the earliest love ties of child to parent and the means by which moral imperatives are internalized in personality. But a psychology of moral behavior cannot be taken as a guide to moral conduct. (In the same way, I would suggest, a psychology of art cannot give us standards by which to judge art. Rieff gets sidetracked here, too.) Moral imperatives, therefore, cannot be *derived* from psychoanalysis, or from psychoanalytic therapy or from any system of "health-values." The "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" can only achieve their imperative quality through the unique conditions provided by the dependency of the child upon his moral teachers and are given permanence in character through his identification with them.

The analysis of moral imperatives in psychoanalytic therapy does not deprive them of their power to influence moral judgments. (As examples I would point out that the analysis of incestuous wishes toward the mother will not lead to incest; the analysis of destructive wishes toward the father will not lead to murder. Analysis deprives the unconscious incestuous and murderous wishes of their power to contaminate areas of normal functioning, to inhibit the sexual function, or work, or to create symptoms.) Psychoanalysis, therefore, can confirm the existence of moral motivations in human character that are permanent and irreversible.

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Hartmann demonstrates very clearly that moral imperatives which are themselves the most stable class of values, constituting the earliest and most powerful voice of conscience, cannot be subjected to objective tests; their validity as a guide to moral behavior is beyond proof and beyond rationalization. A man who cannot bring himself to murder does not ask himself, like Raskolnikov, "After all, why not?" He cannot. The "thou shalt not" requires no verification.

Hartmann criticizes the tendency today to substitute health-values for moral values, sometimes formulated as "there are not moral or immoral people, there are only healthy and sick people." There are many neurotics, he points out, who are "highly moral" and often socially useful, while there are many "healthy" people who are neither. Since health valuations do not have the psychological character of moral imperatives, Hartmann argues, there is a psychological error in the implication that they can substitute for "genuine moral valuations"—and by "genuine" he means integrated into character.

Hartmann notes that people who have undergone analysis certainly do not have a uniform hierarchy of moral values or similar moral codes. (This is a strong argument against the belief that psychoanalysis indoctrinates or that a system of health values can be derived from the theory or therapy psychoanalysis.) This is not to say that psychoanalysis cannot have an influence on moral life, but that it does not provide standards of conduct based on health ethics. Hartmann quotes Freud: "Why should analyzed people be altogether better than others? Analysis makes for unity but not necessarily for goodness." Hartmann expands these remarks: "If moral inadequacy is due to neurotic causes, successful analysis can remedy it. The more successful integration psychoanalysis promotes may have an effect also on moral conduct. . . . The broadening of self-awareness, which is, of course, a regular result of analysis, can influence the degree of consistency of the "moral system," etc.

Has psychoanalysis contributed to the devaluation of moral values by the unmasking of moral pretense? One must realize, writes Hartmann, "that in addition to moral pretenses there are moral motivations which have the full dynamic significance of independent forces in the mental economy. The discovery by psychoanalysis that

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highly valued moral behavior may have roots in instinctual tendencies or self-interest has led to the mistaken view that high valuation is an illusion." Hartmann speaks of this as "the genetic mistake." (To illustrate: if moral revulsion against sadism is a reaction-formation against the infantile pleasure in destruction, is moral revulsion devalued by its origins in an opposite tendency? The psychoanalytic view is that the later moral attitude has achieved independence from its instinctual origins, that it has autonomy in the sphere of mental operations and has validity for what it is, a stable and permanent moral attitude that guarantees against the return of the instinct.)

There is the common belief that psychoanalysis empties the contents of the id and brings the instinctual life and unconscious mental processes under the control of the ego and rationality. (Rieff, too, is inclined to see psychoanalytic therapy in this light.) Hartmann, who has much to say about rationality in the volume under discussion also touched on this problem in an essay published twenty years ago and recently reissued (*Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*). Hartmannn suggests that a misconception has arisen out of Freud's statement, "Where id was, there shall ego be." "It does not mean," Hartmann comments, "that there has ever been, or could be, a man who is purely rational; it implies only a cultural historical tendency and a therapeutic goal" [expressed in relative terms]. "There is no danger that the id could ever be 'dried up' nor that all the ego functions could be reduced to intellectual functions." This "rational" man, if he could be produced, would be a "man without qualities" says Hartmann, borrowing Musil's phrase.

It should be mentioned that Hartmann in his essay on moral values does not alter in any way Freud's own views on the psychology of moral behavior or the position he stated for psychoanalysis in regard to moral values. Rieff is under the impression that there is a "school" of ego-psychology that has revised Freudian psychology and has "attacked" (Freud's) "weakling conception of the ego." Hartmann is in fact one of the leading scholars in the field of ego-psychology but the theorists in this field (Rieff mentions Kris, for example) are not members of a deviant or revisionist wing of psychoanalysis. They are in the mainstream of Freudian psychoanalysis. It was Freud himself who in the 'twenties turned the attention of

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analytic scholars to the study of the ego and who laid the theoretical groundwork for an ego-psychology.

Finally, something must be said about the most unsettling question that arises out of Freud's writings, the question of moral responsibility. If unconscious wishes can motivate behavior is a man fully responsible for his actions? Does he have moral responsibility for ideas of which he has no conscious knowledge? Does he have moral responsibility for his dreams? Rieff understands Freud to give moral absolution for unconscious thoughts. Rieff writes: "We cannot be held responsible, Freud argues, for the thoughts expressed in our dream life." He cites as authority Freud's essay, "Moral Responsibility for the Content of Dreams" and, unaccountably, he has exactly reversed Freud's statement! This is what Freud said:

"Obviously one must hold oneself responsible for the evil impulses of one's dreams. In what other way can one deal with them? Unless the content of the dream (rightly understood) is inspired by alien spirits, it is part of my own being. If I seek to classify the impulses that are present in me according to social standards into good and bad, I must assume responsibility for both sorts; and if, in defense, I say that what is unknown, unconscious and repressed in me is not my 'ego', then I shall not be basing my position upon psychoanalysis. . . ."

Rieff's psychological man, the man of reasoned morality, prudently steering his course by self-interest and health-ethics, is worth the attention bestowed upon him by a social scientist. He remains unclaimed by psychoanalysis, and the authority of psychoanalysis which Rieff claims for him is not supported by the theory or the therapeutic method of psychoanalysis. Rieff could have made a stronger case for his new moral type if he could have separated the scientific idea from its later forms as it became absorbed into the culture. A scientific idea may retain its integrity as long as it retains its connection with science and its methods. When it passes over into popular usage it inevitably acquires new meanings and uses which are no longer subjected to definition or to scientific validation. The term "repression," for example, as it was absorbed into popular culture and usage has lost nearly all connections with Freud's concept of repression, except through the name itself. In contemporary thought and morality the concept of repression has probably had

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little influence outside of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, psychology and related fields. But the popular term "repression" with its uncertain antecedents in the concept has probably been one of the most influential words in the twentieth century. If this concept goes astray in Greenwich Village shall we hold Freud accountable for the wayward idea in the same way that a father is responsible for his delinquent minor? And whose concept of repression are we talking about? Freud's or Mabel Dodge Luhan's?

The example of "repression" above is my own, but I wish to illustrate in this way the hazards of tracing influential ideas. Mr. Rieff's new moral type reflects with startling accuracy a psychological attitude and system of beliefs that might be called "the popular Freud," Freudian ideas that were made over in popular usage and lost their connections with the original concepts. Strictly speaking, these are no longer "Freudian ideas." Freud's "influence" on contemporary ideas and morality cannot be traced from his writings to the social product without accounting for the reshaping of these ideas by popular usage and by other historical and cultural tendencies of the times. It might even be said that the popular Freud has had vastly greater influence upon contemporary ideas and morals than the scientist Freud.

Selma Fraiberg

OTHER PEOPLE'S AFFAIRS

OUR VISIT TO NIAGARA. By Paul Goodman. Horizon. $3.95.
THE BEAT OF LIFE. By Barbara Probst Solomon. Lippincott. $3.95.
RABBIT, RUN. By John Updike. Knopf. $4.00.

Without gossip, without the novel, what would we do? Since it's not enough simply to live, or even to be conscious of what our own real manner of life may be, or how this differs from the public versions of our lives—since we must somehow or other share this knowledge if either the public or the private manner of life is to be endurable, we gossip and we read. Gossip creates among ourselves and our friends a little society that knows something about

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itself (this is the reason we don't really mind the continual "betrayal" behind our backs); and the novel enlarges this group for us. Also the novel can bring us, sometimes, news that even gossip cannot bring, things we really do need to know and need to talk about, too. Maybe gossip (in "mixed company") is freer than ever today, and certainly the novel is, about things that used to be secret. It was thought that this would be a great blessing.

Surely it would be hard to wish this freedom away, to ask for a return to reticence. Yet in some ways it may only make things worse. That is, the freedom of subject and language in our talk and in our writing may have changed our talk, but has it changed the things that happen? Perhaps it has, somewhat. We can come very directly now to the center of our troubles, or at least to the center of other people's, so that their troubles stand for our own; perhaps this has brought us all to act more openly and more at the center of troubles. Has this done anything to get rid of the troubles? No, it hasn't so far. Still, we want to know what people *do;* everybody does *something,* and we need to know.

One thing novels have always given us that gossip gives less well to most of us is knowledge of new sorts of trouble, or trouble that seems a bit new to us, the trouble of the very young. We need to know this, because their way of life is only the result of ours, is ours refined and stripped. But this is hard for us to know because the very young don't like to tell the truth about it to us, and while the essential problems of a culture may become more and more acute, the way they are lived through changes very rapidly with great acceleration. We can't rely on memories of our own experience.

Everybody must recall the shocked misadventures of Mary McCarthy's young heroine of the 'thirties in acquiring her first "pessary"; and only a couple of years ago, the Radcliffe girl in Philip Roth's story was troubled enough by her guilty possession of a diaphragm to leave it around for her mother to find, thus ending her affair. The girl in *The Beat of Life,* by Barbara Probst Solomon, as she moves in with her young man upon graduation from college, is chatting with him about the past—Spain, Bunny Berigan, and all that—and says, "I've never seen an old-fashioned contraceptive. They must have been dreadful."

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"People still use them."

"Do they really? Why?"

Well, he says, fellows need them sometimes.

"I can't imagine what kind of girls they go around with," she says. "None of my friends would go for a thing like that. Why, it must be a disgusting sensation."

I for one am prepared to believe this is how they talk now. Times change, and through novels we first learn how things are now, or through them we are made conscious of it, or imitate it, as people used to talk like characters in Hemingway: both the boy and the girl in Roth's story had *read* Mary McCarthy. Just so, *The Beat of Life* (unfortunate title, with its claim and disclaimer of "Beat"), is self-consciously representative of this year's generation. And it persuades me of its truth, it persuades me at least that the style of life presented here is likely to become a very popular one among the educated young, if indeed it is not already so, up there on the West Side, where perhaps the Puerto Rican joints are crowded while the Village joints are left to the middle-aged. They eat in cafeterias, can't stand jazz, won't get married. They cultivate the bleak and the empty and the ugly, because the good things, good food, good jazz, good wars, all belonged to their parents. Only sex, "good sex," is no longer a problem. They have what we have all talked about for so long. And that's what finally trips them up.

This is another sort of news, even more conducive to talk about the times than the style of the times reported in this book. Novelists sometimes in the dreams that are their plots bring us up against the center of things as the other ways we have of learning about our times may not do. The heroine of *The Beat of Life,* Natasha, fair, snub-nosed, blue-eyed, comes from a pleasant, aloof, Fifth Avenue Jewish family named Thompson. The boy is Tim Lanahan, son of a lady social scientist, brought up in Greenwich Village with her series of husbands; he dreams of his real father out in the cold and lovely Green Bay, Wisconsin, that he has never seen. Very self-consciously and effectively these families are made to seem representative, and the boy and the girl, for all the careful plotting and planning of their individual backgrounds, manage to seem representative too. They do manage to seem very representative and charming and touching.

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Natasha becomes pregnant. Tim panics at the thought of becoming a parent, a man. She has an abortion, and then she kills herself, for she was only a sweet girl who wanted a man and had the sweet, sensitive girl's weakness for the self-conscious boy who is indeed the most representative figure of his generation, because he will never grow up, he will always belong to the year of his graduation from college. These two are as alone as Daphnis and Chloe, and as innocent and as charming, too; why must their pastoral end so badly? For the girl's death does not seem gratuitous, merely a finish to a story and a justification for an attitude like Catherine's death in that other pastoral, *A Farewell To Arms.* This Daphnis and Chloe have come up against biology, not as their originals did who weren't able to guess what their strange warm stirrings could mean, but against the one fact that none of our free speech or free writing about sex or even our freedom of action about sex can prepare us for or teach us entirely to evade: even diaphragms can fail, and what then? Nobody, least of all their parents, cares that Tim and Natasha have their "good sex"; but nobody tells them or shows them or forces them to consider what there is to do next.

Perhaps I have spoken of this pleasant, fresh, earnest novel as though it were the soap-opera of an ignorant crisis. It is not that, nor is it a big deep novel that carries us to some profundity beyond moral and social questions; it is a story written honestly and shrewdly with no pretensions to literary innovation. But it is persuasive, as it seeks to be, and I, for one, believe that this is how things must be.

John Updike's novel, *Rabbit, Run,* and Paul Goodman's stories in *Our Visit to Niagara* also propose to us representative news of the world we live in. You will know something of the plot of *Rabbit, Run,* for it has been a favorite of the daily reviewers this fall. The hero, Rabbit Angstrom, like Tim Lanahan, is a youth, or former youth, who cannot grow up; and his sexuality, like Tim's, brings disaster. This novel, though, is quite unlike Barbara Solomon's. Its literary manner is very tricky and ambitious, the news it brings us of how life is lived today may be bad news, as hers is, but it is brought to us not with sympathy and charm but with poisonous loathing; this "fifth largest city in Pennsylvania" keeps its ugly, stupid people not in a drab New York but in hell if there ever was one; and while I don't know what we *do* if we are persuaded of

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Barbara Solomon's truth, if a reader were persuaded of Updike's truth he would go out and make himself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

Rabbit was once a high-school basketball star; now he is twenty-six, with a pregnant wife, a child, a grubby flat, a job in the dime store; suddenly he runs away. "I once played a game real well," he says. "I really did. And after you're first-rate at something, no matter what, it kind of takes the kick out of being second-rate. And that little thing Janice and I had going, boy, it was really second-rate." Now only in sex does he feel first-rate. He moves in with a girl who has been a whore, "in a way," and who falls in love with him; goes back to his wife when she gives birth to their second child; runs away again, leaving the wife to get so drunk she drowns the child in its bath; comes back, and runs away again at the child's funeral; learns the other girl is pregnant and runs from her; just runs, this time, up the mountain.

It is a parable intended to surprise and shock. Rabbit seems at first destined for our sympathy; perhaps, it seems, he is going to be another modern picaresque hero, casting off his bonds of respectability to knock around from one roguish seduction to another, with his principle the modern motto, "All I know is what's inside *me*. That's all I have." The very mannered writing, all in the present tense, seems to encourage that expectation; it lights up especially in sexual passages.

> He kisses her lips; her lips expect more than they get. Into their wet flower he drops a brief bee's probe. . . . Light lies along her right side where it can catch her body as it turns in stillness; this pose, embarrassed and graceful, she holds; rigidity is her one defense against his eyes and her figure does come to seem to him inviolable; absolute; her nakedness swings in tides of stone.

This is not simply Rabbit's own illiterate imagery brought to fine words; the language for the other characters is much the same, and the same, too, when nobody knows but us and the author. These "well-written" phrases become, finally, revolting: *His big suede shoes skim in thumps above the skittering litter of alley gravel. . . . their locked hands a starfish leaping through the dark . . . a solitary plum tree ball[s] with bloom, a whiteness the black limbs seem to*

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gather from the blowing clouds and after a moment hurl away, so the reviving grass is bleached by an astonishing storm of confetti. . . . Mr. Springer in a spiffy dark gray drip-dry and Nelson in a sissy suit with straps . . . her wild heart bathes the universe in red. . . . And the revulsion the reader feels at being asked to take pleasure in these verbal displays is transferred to a revulsion for the feelings of the characters that he is being asked to share, for Rabbit's wish for irresponsibility, for Rabbit's sexual readiness and random tenderness. But this is not enough, and indeed many reviewers have been puzzled by what they have taken for a discrepancy between all this "good writing" about "good feelings" and the fierce morality of this tract; for "good sex" is known to be a positive value today, whatever the circumstances. So it will not do that the destruction caused here could come from plain old intercourse. The reader is to be shocked by Rabbit's unbridled desires: he wants blowing and buggery. You start with what's "inside" you, you let yourself do what seems natural, the next thing you know whatever you have touched is destroyed. The little whore tells him straight out, and here, I think, we are to believe every word. "Boy, you really have the touch of death, don't you?" And we are to believe, also, the next step of meaning: "In the white light, faces wear the American expression, eyes squinting and mouth sagging open in a scowl, that makes them look as if they are about to say something menacing and cruel." *Rabbit, Run,* then, is not a description or a moral lesson, but literally a damnation, and what is damned is all the poor effort of humanity. And the unctuous skill is there to confuse us, to mix the obvious truth that there must be responsibility in feeling with the covert meaning that feeling is death, the obvious truth of the misery of our time with the covert meaning that life itself on this earth is a miserable squalor.

It is tedious to read so many pages of sheer fiction. After a while the reader may begin to wonder, Why doesn't he simply *say* it? We don't really care so much what happens to the so-called people, the characters, and this is often true today, I believe, even with the best novels. One of the pleasant things about Paul Goodman is that he seems to have this impatience, too. The stories in *Our Visit to Niagara* are most of them mixtures of fable, memoir, fiction, and essay. When the action seems to be running out, or

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getting too wound up, Goodman simply interrupts with a short speech, explaining or extending the drama, and all is well. It is a pleasure to hear Goodman explain and extend meanings, or even to hear him describe his own reactions to his inventions, with his ready tears, his sobs, his cries of joy, his wide-eyed wonder that things can be as they are.

Goodman is at once so well-grounded in knowledge of things, and cares so deeply about the hopes and failures of our society, that it seems too bad he is not recognized as a major prophet. Yet he is giddy and reckless in manner, too, with an old-fashioned air of New Directions about him sometimes, and this puts people off. His own air of surprise at the failure of the world to take him seriously, charming and urgent as this may appear, is partly a weakness, too. It gives him a tone of the false-naive. He has very little real feeling for the things that hold us back, for the stubborn fallen nature of man; the characters of his stories are always symbols, never flesh and blood. And there is a kind of jumpy euphoria even in his recitals of our disasters, as when his Everyman says, "I don't know the first things. What to teach my children, nor how to get them to learn it if I knew. I don't know how to fix the machines I use every day. They get me in wars, but how in hell should I know what's it about?"

Goodman really does know these things, though, and when he tells us, in what he calls his "usual impractical helpful manner," he is an essayist of surpassing interest. Perhaps with his new book, *Growing Up Absurd,* to which most of the pieces in *Niagara* might be marginalia or inter-leaves, he will reach the position he deserves; certainly that long essay is far beyond the depth of such an acclaimed prophet as Galbraith. Goodman's big fantastic novel, *The Empire City,* very nearly became a popular success—one hears that the publishers were not, to say the least, helpful. Anyway, there is much sense and much delight in these stories, fables, or whatever they may be called, and this is so not least because they do not try to be one great unreasonably sustained charade of realistic persons, landscapes, plots, fiction.

This is not boredom with literature. The fact is that to read novels or poems today actually requires something like the historical sense we must bring to Greek drama or Elizabethan verse; few of

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these books today have the power to strike us thoughtlessly and directly. We read them, I think, not with the old sense that this is life only more so, but with the historical sense that these constructions are the oblique comments of an author who feels and thinks certain things about life but would not otherwise be willing to say them. For contemporary literature this will not work. We do not want to have to assume attitudes in order to read what should be news to us. There are many reasons for this; perhaps one of the least of them, but a real one, is simply that doing what it had to do, our literary criticism has extended our awareness so far that it has become harder and harder for us to experience literary art in the old unconscious way. Can we now feel for the names in novels, as we used to do, the old pity and terror and purgation?

Every form of our literature is turning more and more to the direct statement, to autobiography, to confession, to forms of the essay. Perhaps soon none of the names will even be changed to protect the guilty. Our willing public ignorance of ourselves may then dissolve not in emotion and ritual but in consciousness, and we may then yet do something about our troubles. Only suppose, for instance, that we agreed to make abortion both legal and blameless. . . . But if that is too much to expect, or too little, we may at least learn to experience our troubles consciously and together. For nothing *really* works; there will always be something left, some mess of troubles, something to gossip about.

John Thompson

VIEWS OF CONRAD

JOSEPH CONRAD: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY. By Jocelyn Baines. McGraw-Hill. $8.50.

The Conrad vogue advances, and having reached the stage of a dozen paperbacks, half a dozen full scale critical studies, some unthinkable quantum of doctoral theses, and the elaborately documented critical biography noted above, may now be accounted official. To be sure, this is less a second wave of Conrad

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interest than a prolongation of the first one. Several works of posthumous piety have been available to those in need of information about the man himself. The several memoirs of Richard Curle describe chiefly the last years; the *Life and Letters* of G. Jean-Aubry (1927) is neither a biography as detailed as Boswell's nor an exhaustive reprinting of the correspondence; but its two full fat volumes were supplemented in 1947 by M. Jean-Aubry's *Vie de Conrad,* translated in 1957 under the rather watery title of *The Sea Dreamer,* and described on its own title page as a definitive biography. (In fact, it is the "Life" out of the *Life and Letters,* somewhat rearranged, mildly rewritten and augmented, but not definitively different.) Now we have yet another biography from Mr. Jocelyn Baines which also aims to be definitive, though it does not presume to decide the matter on its title page.

Since he evidently aims to supplant Jean-Aubry, Mr. Baines would have done well to tell us what, if anything, he owes to his predecessor. This courtesy was the less to be neglected because in many sections, particularly those describing Conrad's crucial early years, Mr. Baines's book varies only verbally from *The Sea Dreamer.* I am not charging plagiarism to Mr. Baines; merely suggesting that the reader who compares (for example) pages 96-100 of his biography with pages 139-147 of Jean-Aubry's, will observe the same facts arranged in the same order with the same quotations used to make the same points and several of the same episodes phrased in almost the same words. Doubtless this effect is inevitable when two men use the same limited facts to tell the same story. Still, the space which Mr. Baines devotes to picking at Jean-Aubry's textual inaccuracies and trifling misstatements of fact might more graciously have been devoted to explaining his own book's relation to its predecessor.

What, then, is the advantage of Mr. Baines's biography over those already in the field? On some strictly biographical matters of considerable importance, it is factually more copious, more specific, and better informed. For instance, the reader is given some grounds to decide whether Conrad, in early 1878, took part in a duel or tried to commit suicide. Both stories have been told, both contain elements of probability, and it is a very good thing to know for sure that we do not know for sure which is true. The details of Conrad's

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strange collaborative efforts with F. M. Hueffer are spelled out fully and carefully. And the last twenty years of Conrad's life, which Jean-Aubry summarized very briefly, occupy a fuller proportion of the new book—at the cost of giving us more of Conrad's hypochondriacal wailings and weepings than will be to everyone's taste.

On the other hand, there are some surprising oversights and obliquities in Mr. Baines's retelling of the story. He does not tell us how, when, or on what terms Conrad became acquainted with Henry James, and generally handles perfunctorily what became one of the most intriguing of literary associations. Indeed, Mr. Baines is not gracious about introductions; Conrad's "friend Hope" turns up on page 122 without a word of explanation as to who he was; Richard Curle has been in and out of the book repeatedly before he is introduced on page 390; and even Conrad's wife Jessie appears for the first time on the page (169) where Conrad decides to marry her—her previous existence and the course of their acquaintance being summarized in a bit of perfunctory afterthought.

Aside from its accomplishments and deficiencies in matters of fact, Mr. Baines's biography is not a distinguished literary performance. He has a curious gift for the untimely and heavyhanded colloquialism. Thus we are treated to the spectacle of Conrad "mooching about," "taking his uncle for a ride," bringing characters alive, "even if a trifle cornily," and, at the age of nearly sixty, "falling for" a girl. These are jarring locutions to discover in the biography of a subtle analyst of human passions, who struggled all his life for the exact descriptive word. In summarizing Conrad's novels, Mr. Baines's literary awkwardness seems accentuated—as the faults of a single half page will exemplify. After picturing for us life aboard a South Seas trader, Conrad, we are told, "goes on to describe in *The Shadow-Line* how this young ship's officer was staying at the Sailors' Home in Singapore, waiting for a passage home, when he realized from the peculiar behaviour of the chief steward and the persistent rather cryptic hints from a certain Captain Patterson (Giles in the story), that something unusual was afoot." The sentence is overloaded, avoidably ugly, and vulgar in its locutions. In recounting the young man's further adventures, Mr. Baines must deal with the former captain of the *Otago*. In addition to being eccentric and neglectful, "he had other unfortunate proclivities too. The night he

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died he threw his violin overboard." One might well depart from this moribund eccentric with a vision of violin-throwing proclivities, if it weren't for Jean-Aubry, who tells us something reasonably specific about dirty poetry, erotic pictures, and suicidal tendencies. The captain did throw his violin overboard, but this was a one-time shot, not a proclivity.

If it imposes itself to some extent as fresh biographical material, and to a much lesser extent as literature, Mr. Baines's book strikes a pretty hollow note as criticism. Writing as he does a five to ten page discussion of each of the major novels (including plot summary, character analysis, stylistic commentary, and review of narrative technique)—plus shorter accounts of selected short stories—Mr. Baines would have to write critical diamonds to get much said. He doesn't. We learn that the early novels are marred by florid and overwritten passages, that they progress slowly. Of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* there is a just and almost eloquent appreciation; but the manifold difficulties of *Lord Jim* are not so much as outlined, much less fully faced. We learn that *Victory* is melodramatic and muddled; and of *Chance* that "whatever its qualities, it is certainly one of Conrad's most imperfect novels"—this judgment is reinforced by Mr. Baines's failure to ascribe to the book any positive qualities at all, except popularity. It is hard to discover what Mr. Baines thinks of *Nostromo,* because after he has said that all the major characters are crude, blurred and unconvincing, and the last two chapters are magazinish and melodramatic, he concludes that otherwise the book is almost without blemish. Since he has begun by challenging comparison with *War and Peace,* we can evidently have *Nostromo* any way we want.

Mr. Baines dislikes overcomplicated readings of the fiction, and sometimes demolishes so many "fanciful" theories that nothing much is left. He tells us, for example, that in "The Secret Sharer" there is "no suggestion of a transcendental relationship between Leggatt and the captain or of the 'double' being a psychological manifestation of an aspect of the original." Moreover, "there is no indication in the story, explicit or implicit, that the captain sees any of his dilemma or difficulties in Leggatt or that he performs any self-examination. Nor is there any 'moral dilemma.' " There is no feeling, even, that the captain is brought to a better knowledge of him-

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self, or a more perfect communion with his first command, through his contact with Leggatt. In fact, says Mr. Baines, the story is "intensely dramatic but, on the psychological and moral level, rather slight." Reduced to these dimensions, "The Secret Sharer" appears ripe for adaptation as a Hitchcock movie or an episode of "Gunsmoke." Yet Mr. Baines concludes that "it is undoubtedly one of his best short stories"—a judgment which promptly forces us back on the preliminary question of whether we should be judging Conrad in the company of Maupassant and Flaubert or in that of Zane Grey and Edgar Wallace.

There is, in fact, a rather disturbing tendency for the critics of Conrad to cancel one another out, even when they don't cancel themselves, as above. They do this in their judgments of the later novels primarily, but sometimes of the earlier ones too. Hewitt, Moser, and Guerard generally agree in dismissing *Victory* from the canon of worthy Conrad, along with all the novels after *Chance* except possibly *The Shadow-Line*. F. R. Leavis and Edward Crankshaw defend *Chance,* Hewitt and Warner actively dislike it, and Guerard says without much enthusiasm that it is the best of an inferior lot. Warner, Leavis, and Miss Bradbrook think *Victory* is a major novel. M. D. Zabel includes both *Victory* and *Chance* among the great novels, but assures us that *Lord Jim* is too dilated to be a masterpiece. Pretty much everyone respects *Nostromo,* but most critics give the impression of having survived rather than enjoyed it, and Guerard finds the last 200 pages deserving of the wastebasket. This is the novel which Mr. Baines puts into competition with *War and Peace;* apparently a third of it is not worth reading.

Novelists who appeal to us on generally recognized and, one might say, conventional grounds (through social comment, for example, psychological subtlety, structural vigor, or imaginative penetration), are not usually subject to such violent fluctuations. Conrad appeals, it is evident, in a special, almost a unique way; he writes, at his most characteristic, a sort of ballad-novel of which the best previous example is *Wuthering Heights*. Critics disagree about him because there is so much puffy clutter to disregard even in the best Conrad, and rhetoric comes so close to substituting for poetry in the worst, that the discriminations are difficult.

Suppose we take *Lord Jim, The Nigger, Heart of Darkness,* and

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perhaps *Youth* as vintage Conrad, on the strength of which he has made his way among readers. Not that this is the only "good" fiction; but that here we will find in highest concentration the qualities which have made readers care about Conrad. There is not much doubt that it is greatly imaginative fiction; not much doubt, either, that it is greatly flawed. For the sake of the mournful poetry hidden in these stories, how much we must put up with! Artificial rhetoric (straining, abstract adjectives contribute the worst of it), artificial feelings (chiefly amorous), clumsy machinery (longwinded letters, impossible observers), gropings and gaspings after points which remain in the end "mysterious," that dreadful bore Marlow with his insistent commentary, his extraneous confusion plastered on top of Conrad's own. Yet out of all this, it is the poetry that we remember, not the purple patches about landscape or heroism or philosophy, but the poetry of failure and of endurance under failure. Conrad's novels are acts of involvement, the conflicts of which frequently surpass the author's powers of resolution, of dramatization, sometimes even of formulation. We connect this gap with "flaws" in the fiction; but in fact the flaws of a systematic overreacher are the conditions of his virtues. If Jim actually did "redeem himself" at Patusan, if honorable fidelity were a sufficient answer to the nihilism of Kurtz, we should be a great deal poorer in our perception of these stories. Some of the power of Conrad's evocation must depend on its romantic incompleteness. But how then shall we draw the line which entitles us to feel *Victory* as stagy and melodramatic?

These considerations provide an ideal field of exercise for the critical biographer; but if the criticism is not incisive and the biography is not artfully engaged with it, the reader will be left at a depressing distance from Conrad. This is the fate of the book under review. After surveying the life and volumes of his subject, Mr. Baines dismisses us with the pretty dim impression that Conrad wrote a number of novels, some of which have been called great and all of which are pretty good, though some are better than others, though no one is quite sure which ones they are, or why. Possibly a critical biography cannot undertake to define matters more closely than this without losing the biographical thread in the critical soup; but it is a real deficiency in the mixed form which leads a man to mingle generally competent and sometimes useful biography with

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thoroughly commonplace criticism. And the last thing to be said about Mr. Baines's biography is that if one subtracts from it all the things which have been said before, so often that they are common knowledge, and all the things which shouldn't have been said at all, one would be left with a contribution indeed, and a real one—but one much closer to fifty than to five hundred pages long.

It was a curious fate which allowed Conrad to be largely neglected while he was doing first-rate work, then raised him to popularity on the basis of inferior work, and has now produced veritable armies of critics intent on probing, expounding, reacting against one another, evaluating, cross-evaluating, and groping after the higher synthesis. Perhaps it is only perverse to hope that this intense effort to domesticate Conrad won't succeed too well. There was a rooted wildness about this intensely cosmopolitan man, to which his best friends bore slightly baffled witness; if he looks a little exotic in the graduate school and the camp of the Levite, there's nothing to say but *"Vive la différence!"*

Robert M. Adams

POETRY CHRONICLES

SECOND AVENUE. By Frank O'Hara. Totem Press. $ .95.
COLLECTED POEMS. By Yvor Winters. Alan Swallow. $1.65.
COLLECTED POEMS. By Lawrence Durrell. Dutton. $5.00.
SONGS. By Christopher Logue. Ivan Obolensky. $3.00.
LUPERCAL. By Ted Hughes. Harper. $3.00.

Frank O'Hara's *Second Avenue* is a poem in eleven parts—about the length of *The Witch of Atlas*. Its chief persona is a sort of Whitmanian I, though other voices appear and disappear as they do for example in the *Cantos* and *Paterson*. The I is warmer well he didn't even have to look at it any more; its details are so naturally associated with his strongest feelings that they are constantly turning into symbols and back into surface again:

Shall I ever be able to avail myself of the service called
"Same Day Cleaning", and in what face have I fought the Host?

Most writers about New York exaggerate or sentimentalize; the

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city has qualities that don't lend themselves easily to lyric expression. I think Mr. O'Hara is the best writer about New York alive, perhaps the only good one; he succeeds in conveying the city's atmosphere not by writing directly about it but by writing about his emotions, all of them somehow filtered through its paint supply stores and its inspiring April smog:

My hands are Massimo Plaster, called "White Pin in the Arm of the Sea"
and I'm blazoned and scorch like a fleet of windbells down the Pulaski Skyway,
tabletops of Vienna carrying their bundles of cellophane to the laundry,
ear to the tongue, glistening semester of ardency, young-old daringness
at the foot of the most substantial art product of our times, the world, the jongleurs. . . .

This poem is the most beautiful and convincing evidence I have read of what it is like to have a body and soul here (more so even than Lorca's marvelous *Poet in New York,* which is programmatically hallucinatory as *Second Avenue* is not).

Second Avenue's language has a good deal to do with its success. Like that of Dr. Williams—from which it differs in other respects—Mr. O'Hara's language is convincing and natural. (There isn't a tedious "literary" use of a word in the whole poem, except when Mr. O'Hara is parodying the built-in solemnity which has been a chief horror of our poetry for twenty years.) Stilted academic language (in which animals are "beasts" and "trust" means only "have faith in" and not "a bank") has never been able to say anything about New York. "Beat" language has done a little better; but, accurate as it may be, it remains a jargon which limits the meanings of words (*cool, bust*), and which is not nearly comprehensive enough to deal with "the most substantial art product of our times." Mr. O'Hara's language is hugely comprehensive and capable of the widest and most surprising effects—from "They are bashing the seals over the head with coke" to

Perk quietly, don't, pension me and ply me with love that's droll,
noose light harms and nutty bathers, use, sip, alarm, and pet,

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eat, sup, end, Antinous, lake of comprehension, unless passion down aimlessly sonorous plusses, denies our doubtful paroles.

To speak historically, I think *Second Avenue* is evidence that the avant-garde style of French poetry from Baudelaire to Reverdy has now infiltrated the American consciousness to such an extent that it is possible for an American poet to write lyrically in it with perfect ease. Since there is so much about us that has never been described and which this language can bring to life, I hope that Mr. O'Hara will go on writing in it, and that other poets will do the same.

The language of the other poets considered in this chronicle is not as alive as Mr. O'Hara's. Their words often don't get through directly to things, they don't communicate like "kisses on the breast, like water from a pitcher."

Mr. Yvor Winters considers his collected poems "a kind of definition by example of the style I have been trying to achieve for a matter of thirty years." The style that Mr. Winters has been after is very different from Mr. O'Hara's, which is both accurate and expansive. The range of experience Mr. Winters writes about is deliberately limited. Style means to him not only exactitude but also tightness, narrowness, and a kind of "purity." In some early poems influenced by Pound and William Carlos Williams Mr. Winters' search for this purity has interesting results—as in the last stanza of "Quod Tegit Omnia" or in "April," with its lovely play on "spring":

The little goat
crops
new grass lying down
leaps up eight inches
into air and
lands on four feet.
Not a tremor—
solid in the
spring and serious
he walks away.

But when Mr. Winters gets away from physical things his language seems to falter: "Can one endure the/acrid steeping darkness of/the brain, which glitters and is/dissipated?" Unless one is writing about

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surgery or cuisine, how can one call the brain the brain the way one calls a goat a goat? And in the poems written after 1930, when Mr. Winters forsook free verse for rhyme and stanza, one comes on the same sort of flatness and inexactitude of language, as well as occasional relapses into the phraseology of other poets. In these later poems (which are full of paradox, ambiguity, and strict wit) the relation between Mr. Winters' style and his subject matter becomes clearer: his search for the hard and pure in language is accompanied by a search for the hard and pure in life:

The young are quick of speech.
Grown middle-aged, I teach
Corrosion and distrust,
Exacting what I must . . .

I like the crankiness of this poem; and many of Mr. Winters' poems do have, like some of our Park Avenue skyscrapers, an admirable hardness and coolness. But I am constantly put off by his language. His poems are made up of live language mixed with dead and literary language (such as "quick of speech," a very different construction from the earlier "solid in the spring") as if their author were unable to tell one from another. In his reaction against what he regarded as the softness and rottenness of modern language and modern life, this poet seems to have felt that anything great and pure, even though dead, could serve as a poetic corrective. But to write poetry at all one either has to use words that are alive or else one has to be able to breathe life into them at least for the length of a phrase. This Mr. Winters too often fails to do. Perhaps self-imposed limitation and constriction is the wrong way to achieve stylistic purity; it is possible that such limitation might cut one off from just those live words that one needed to make one's pure poem an effective one.

Lawrence Durrell's poems have other virtues and other flaws than those of Mr. Winters. Far from being too tight and constricted, Mr. Durrell's poems about love, history, Greek islands, and Egyptian cities, tend to be loose—sometimes to the point of flaccidity. His poetry does, however, communicate a sensuous pleasure in words that one never gets from reading Mr. Winters. If Mr. Winters is interested in purity of outline, Mr. Durrell is interested in elaboration of surface: "The islands rebuffed by water./Estuaries

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of putty and gold./A smokeless arc of Latin sky./One star, less than a week old" and, at his best, "rosy as feet of pigeons pressed/In clay." Sometimes Mr. Durrell is able to sustain a simple and sensuous declarative style for the length of a poem, as in "This Unimportant Morning," which begins

This unimportant morning
Something goes singing where
The capes turn over on their sides
And the warm Adriatic rides
Her blue and sun washing
At the edge of the world and its brilliant cliffs . . .

and which is lovely, in its quiet, somewhat old-fashioned way.

But Mr. Durrell's poetry cannot do what Mr. O'Hara's does so effectively—that is, communicate ideas and complexity of feeling by means of words sensuously perceived and employed. Mr. Durrell's sensitivity to language seems to be chiefly to the physical shape of words, no matter what they mean or who has used them before. The surface of his poetry is pleasant if one can stop thinking, but its intellectual and metaphorical content is not strong enough to tease us out of thought. Mr. Durrell never writes ugly lines, but he does write some empty ones, and some which are just entirely in someone else's style (most often middle Auden: "For Time does not heed its own expenditure"; "Awkwardly enclosing the commonwealth of his love"). And I would guess it is the pleasure he gets from the sound and surface of such a poem as "At Rhodes" which enables him to let its exciting metaphorical possibilities expire in very flat lines:

Anonymous hand, record one afternoon
In May, sometime before the fig leaf:
Boats lying idle in the sky, a town
Thrown as on a screen of watered silk,
Lying on its side, reddish and soluble,
A sheet of glass leading down into the sea . . .

Down here an idle boy catches a cicada:
Imprisons it, laughing, in his sister's cloak
In whose warm folds the silly creature sings.

Shape of boats, body of a young girl, cicada,
Conspire and join each other here,
In twelve sad lines against the dark.

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The variations on vowels and consonants could not be prettier. And the imagery of boats, sky, silk, and sea put against the cicida inside the girl's clothes is wonderfully suggestive—think what Pasternak would have done with this situation, for example. But Mr. Durrell lets it die in its pretty language, in the easy exoticism of May and fig leaf and the sweet sadness of being a poet.

Mr. Christopher Logue writes about important things like sex and the atomic bomb, but poems—as Mallarmé observed—are made with words, and Mr. Logue is very weak in raw materials. He tries to dress up his drab and unmusical language with Elizabethanisms and various cliches of modern poetry, but the result is rather a clumsy pastiche than a style. Example from the love poetry: "Child, I am no Elizabethan hack/Spicing his dalliance in a sonnet's pot"; from the bomb poetry (a newsy—T. S. Eliot has just gotten married—attack on the elder poets)

So do you agree with them,
Spender, and Barker, and Auden?
And you, my newly-married master, Eliot—
Will you adopt their lie by silence,
And having sold our flesh to war
Bequeath our bones to God?

The book includes translations of Pablo Neruda and a section of Mr. Logue's translation of the Iliad, which is too determinedly modern in an old-fashioned way to be readable: "From a duck's egg, a duck. Doubtless his relative Scamander/Will cleanse this dead, wet, wreck of an obstinate man./A River king came in his mother's slit so, proud of it,/He went for me." But no amount of turgid Elizabethanism plus modern slang, however, is a substitute for a style of one's own.

Mr. Ted Hughes seems a more interesting writer than Mr. Logue, but he seems to be as fatally attracted to modern poetry as Mr. Durrell is to lovely language and Mr. Winters to purity. The influence of Marianne Moore: "Underwater eyes, an eel's/Oil of water body, neither fish nor beast is the otter" (though in the same poem will be something as un-Marianne Moore—and un-anything—as "Blood is the belly of logic"). Of Yeats: "My sires had towers and great names,/And that their effort be brought to an edge/Honed their bodies away, dreams/The tramp in the

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sodden ditch." Of Dylan Thomas: "And lit the fox in the dripping ground."

One hopes Mr. Hughes will be brave enough to part with his stylistic influences. And also with the tramps, drunkards, hawks, and Telemachuses, subjects which have proved almost automatically productive of mediocre poems since the death of W. B. Yeats. One hopes this because sometimes his poetry comes alive and his language seems genuinely his:

The stars make pietas. The owl announces its sanity.

The crow sleeps glutted and the stoat begins.
There are eye-guarded eggs in the hedgerows,
Hot haynests under the roots in burrows.
Couples at their pursuits are laughing in the lanes.

No discussion of where poetry is at the end of 1960 would be complete without some mention of John Ashbery's *Europe,* whose 111 (short) sections occupy thirty pages of *Big Table* #4. *Europe* is a very exciting poem because it contains what amounts to a new method of poetic notation—

17. *I moved up*
glove
the field

18. *I must say I*
suddenly
she left the room, oval tear tonelessly fell—

though such isolated passages can give one little idea of the poem's amazing technical inventiveness. *Europe* is a very different poem from *Second Avenue.* Mr. O'Hara suffuses details with emotion, whereas Mr. Ashbery tends rather to arrange details in such a way as to create emotion. What the poems have in common is the directness and originality of their language and a technical mastery so complete that it gives pleasure with almost every word. If both these poems are "difficult," they are none the less among the very few poems of recent years in which one's difficulty is more than perfunctorily rewarded; *Europe* and *Second Avenue* have more to offer than "exercise"—what they have is the illumination of life turned into language and language turned into life.

Kenneth Koch

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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF WELDON KEES. Edited by Donald Justice. The Stone Wall Press. $18.
THE WOMAN AT THE WASHINGTON ZOO. By Randall Jarrell. Atheneum Publishers. $3.75.
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS. By Howard Nemerov. The University of Chicago Press. $3.50.

In some periods there are poets who function in certain respects more as critics than as poets. The 1930's and '40's were particularly rich in writers who self-consciously looked for the roots of what they considered to be their withered language in the dry sand of their times. Their poems provided analytic breakdowns of the symptoms of their ailing culture. For the most part they found little reason to hope. During the period in question, Ronald Bottrall was the perfect example of this kind of poet:

The future is not for us, though we can set up
Our barriers, rest in our dead-embered
Sphere, till we come to pause over our last loving-cup
With death.

The very limitation of inspiration we find in these poets imparts a kind of importance to their verse. Their persistent consciousness of the failures of the age and culture was a thread on which our bitterest recognitions were strung: a thread which may have helped us, may still help us, out of certain mazes. In the nature of the case, these poets were distinctly minor; but all we owe to minor poets is more than all of us can say.

The Collected Poems of Weldon Kees, beautifully printed in a limited edition, is a memorial volume to the poet. On July 18, 1955, as Mr. Donald Justice's Preface tells us, Weldon Kees's car "was found abandoned on the approach to Golden Gate Bridge." Kees was one of those minor poets of bitter recognition whose work becomes valuable for the future just because the recognition is so intensely and narrowly focused. The nature of his death naturally calls Hart Crane to mind; but however one may qualify one's approval of Crane's work, Kees could never approach him as a poet. Paradoxically, this is to Kees's credit as a man, for the best poets are often the most selfish ones, and the nature of Kees's recognitions was profoundly unselfish and humane. Crane was primarily concerned with the confusions of his own inspiration; Kees's poetry

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began in a comprehensive pity, heard through the bitterness, for the world and life around him.

It is impossible to agree with one of Mr. Justice's statements from the Preface: Kees "speaks to us . . . in a particular tone of voice which we have never heard before." Kees's talent was too limited to make any large claim to uniqueness. One *has* heard this tone of voice often, though rarely with such sincerity. It has the representative quality of a generation that looked into the face of its culture and saw a memento mori. Kees was a poet whose limited talent acquires a certain luster and significance when viewed in the perspective of his generous humanity. His poetry is the shocked recoil of a decent, sensitive man from an indecent, insensitive time. Although his reaction was shared by other writers of the '30's and '40's, his work should retain a special value for the future because in him the reaction was human rather than intellectual.

Kees, like other poets of his period, was a good deal concerned with time. Time has always been a preoccupation of poets. For the seventeenth century it was erosive in a way that emphasized the hard materiality of created things:

> *And tear our pleasures with rough strife*
> *Thorough the iron gates of life.*

It is the gates of the five senses here that are iron: time, if insistent, is curiously elusive and insubstantial in the winged chariot that Marvell allows him. For the Victorians, time was historic and processional, and already growing nostalgic in a way that the twentieth century would capitalize on:

> *And the stately ships go on*
> *To their haven under the hill;*
> *But O for the touch of a vanished hand*
> *And the sound of a voice that is still.*

For the poets of Kees's decades, time had lost its stately processional quality and had turned into an unscrupulous landlord threatening to cancel the lease or foreclose the mortgage. As Kees put it:

> *This is the end of the swollen year*
> *When even the sound of the rain repeats:*
> The lease is up, the time is near.

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For poets in this tradition, the 1950's presented special difficulties. The lease might reasonably be supposed to have terminated, the mortgage to have been foreclosed. Mr. Randall Jarrell as a poet is not narrowly in the tradition we have been discussing here, but his new volume, *The Woman at the Washington Zoo,* does suggest a farther stage; and at least one poem, "The End of the Rainbow," indicates with what complexity time is now treated.

In an early poem, "For My Daughter," Kees ends with the line, "I have no daughter. I desire none." The first three poems in Mr. Jarrell's volume are concerned with the emotional and spiritual nullity in the lives of three women. I suppose, in a general way, they represent the dangers Kees felt threatened any and all daughters today: "Parched years that I have seen/ That may be hers appear." Of the three poems, "The End of the Rainbow" is by far the most distinguished. Its attitude to time is its most interesting aspect. Time's erosive quality, once celebrated in the *carpe diem* poems, no longer has meaning, for the world of the senses is no longer convincing to us as it was to Marvell. Similarly, the historic and processional quality has led to nothing at all. In this situation, time is a churn in which experience, now hopelessly watered down, is whirled about in pointless agitation. But all the churning produces no golden solid, and perhaps the only reality we are left with is a sense of the flux of time itself. In a curious way this poem reminds one of Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries,* in which time is liberated from the processional sequence. The images in both poem and film, whether verbal or visual, possess a fluidity that telescopes time. For the audience of both works, time *is* the experience, and the images and actions are little more than an offered mode of apprehending it. The following long passage from near the end of the poem should help to make this clear:

She wakes, sometimes, when she has met a friend
In the water; he is just standing in the water, bathing.
He has shaved now, and smells of peppermint.
He holds out to her
With hands like hip-boots, like her father's waders,
A corsage of watercress: the white bridal-veil-lace flowers
Are shining with water-drops. In their clear depths
She sees, like so many cupids, water-babies:
Little women, little men.

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He pulls his feet with a slow sucking sound
From the floor where he is stuck, like a horse in concrete,
And, reaching to her, whispers patiently
—Whispers, or the wind whispers, water whispers "Say.
Say. Say now. Say again."

A slow
Delicious shudder runs along her spine:
She takes off her straw sailor.
Red again, and long enough to sit on,
Her hair floats out to him—and, slowly, she holds out to him
In their white, new-washed gloves, her dry
Brown leather hands, and whispers: "Father,
If you come any closer I'll call Father."

He melts, in dark drops, to a little dark
Pool drying on the floor, to Su-Su. It is Su-Su!
She holds out to the little dark
Grave drying in the grass, her little dry
Bouquet of ice-plant, of geranium,
And reads: In loving memory of Su-Su
I, II, III, IV.
She says: "That four is a mistake.
One two three is right, but leave out four."

While there are important differences, there are also similarities between this poem and "Gerontion." We are not as narrowly confined within the orbit of this woman's thoughts as we are in the case of Eliot's old man, but in the theater of her mind we nonetheless perceive the quality and the defeat of a lifetime. And behind the individual life we sense the force of larger pressures. This episode from the past is not recovered in tranquil recollection. It belongs to a comprehensive instant which is a telescoping of a total life draining into emptiness. The future is ominously gathered in by that closing reference to Su-Su IV (the woman's pet Pekinese): "That four is a mistake." Su-Su IV is still alive, and at her feet. A lifetime measured by the graves of dogs all bearing the same name is as Websterian and portentous as any recent image I recollect. The water imagery underscores the conception of time as a flux in which present, past, and future are dissolved, and at the same time it bears the flotsam of sexual implications that are essential to the poem. The poetry has a shimmering quality that both

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obscures and reveals meaning, which lies like a bright object at the bottom of a pool. Only rarely does Jarrell allow the verbal quality to sharpen into wit, as in these delightful lines:

A quarter of an hour and we tire
Of any landscape, said Goethe; eighty years
And he had not tired of Goethe. The landscape had,
And disposed of Goethe in the usual way.

Other poems in the volume are of interest, but this poem represents the achievement. The bitterness of Kees's recognitions is replaced here by a resigned, but not more hopeful, attitude. The human condition described is one of such nullity that it presents time with nothing to erode, and a progression is of course impossible. The poem is brilliantly organized—so brilliantly that it requires several readings before one is aware that what is being organized is really only time itself.

For such poets, men have long been leading lives of quiet desperation. I borrow Thoreau's fine phrase here because reading Mr. Howard Nemerov's *New and Selected Poems* brings Thoreau's prose vividly to mind. These poems may be taken as another example of how intimately the statement of poetry and the statement of prose share the same virtues. Poem after poem in the present volume has sent me back to *Walden,* and everywhere I have been impressed by a similarity that is not, certainly, parallelism, but which exists in a serenity of temperament, a water-clear and air-cool vision of reality, that both writers share. The essence of this temperament is a deep faith in the organic processes of life, a belief not in mere recurrence, but in significant renewal. Time is a dominant theme in these poems, but here it is only a measure: a measure of life:

Consider how the seed lost by a bird
Will harbor in its branches most remote
Descendants of the bird: while everywhere
And unobserved, the soft green stalks and tubes
Of water are hardening into wood, whose hide,
Gnarled, knotted, flowing, and its hidden grain,
Remember how the water is streaming still.

There is no space to comment adequately on these poems, but I should like to quote the opening of "The Sanctuary." Its language

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seems to me so beautifully employed that one is grateful for it as for the clear water it describes. It is a metaphysical poem in the strictest sense of the term, but its meaning is so perfectly contained in its lines that we experience it without the effort of intellectual analysis, almost beyond thought's dimension. In "The End of the Rainbow," time seemed to be the ultimate actor, almost the ground and meaning of experience itself. But the verses below are beautiful because they live in a world of perception that transcends time, a world in which experience is once again focused at its human center:

Over a ground of slate and light gravel,
Clear water, so shallow that one can see
The numerous springs moving their mouths of sand;
And the dark trout are clearly to be seen,
Swimming this water which is color of air
So that the fish appear suspended nowhere and
In nothing. With a delicate bend and reflex
Of their tails the trout slowly glide
From the shadowy side into the light, so clear,
And back again into the shadows; slow
And so definite, like thought emerging
Into a clear place in the mind, then going back,
Exchanging shape for shade. Now and again
One fish glides into the center of the pool
And hangs between the surface and the slate
For several minutes without moving, like
A silence in a dream; and when I stand
At such a time, observing this, my life,
Seems to have been suddenly moved a great
Distance away on every side, as though
The quietest thought of all stood in the pale
Watery light alone, and was no more
My own than the speckled trout I stare upon
All but unseeing.

Marius Bewley

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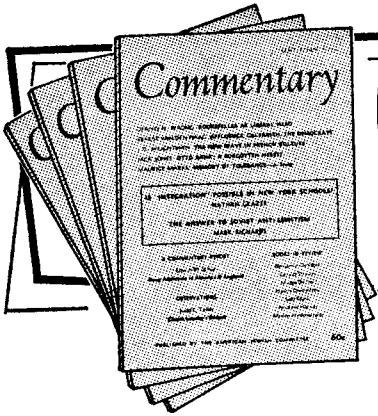

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IN SUPPORT OF THE FRENCH INTELLECTUALS

During the last few months in France opposition to the Algerian War has led to a rise of a broad movement of opinion whose political and moral significance extends beyond the frontiers of that country. This is so not only because what happens in France is of concern to the world at large, but because the views expressed in the course of this grouping raise questions of principle that are valid everywhere.

The fact that the promoters and sponsors of such a movement are intellectuals, in a period when reason seemed condemned to silence or submission to the principles of "political realism," is in itself a noteworthy and important circumstance. Hence, the main example that the French intellectuals have set is appealing to reason without taking expediency into account.

The open repudiation of the Algerian War through group declarations and appeals, as well as through individual testimony by the most active and thoughtful of those who form public opinion in France (among whom are many militant Christians) does not only signify condemnation of an unjust and savage war. It also reaffirms the principle that *raison d'etat* and "national interest" are valid, if at all, only insofar as they do not conflict with the dictates of conscience and the claims of humanity. This has been expressed with particular clarity and resoluteness in the *Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the Algerian War* whose sponsors and signatories are now the victims of legal and illegal government proceedings.

When we see intellectuals being prosecuted for having asserted the citizen's right to refuse to obey unjust orders, we cannot help recalling the lesson of recent history. Fascist and Nazi rule, the last war, and the post war situation in several countries on both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain, plus the judgement of Nuremberg have amply demonstrated that unquestioning execution of orders and blind obedience to authority can be criminal, while disobedience is not only a right, but is sometimes a duty of the first order. The barbaric slogan, "My country right or wrong", should have been buried in the extermination camps with the victims of those who did

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not know how to choose between obedience to madness and disobedience in the name of reason.

Over and above its specific local significance, the *Declaration* has a meaning that concerns us all. As fervidly as almost every nation has heretofore claimed the right not to be oppressed, a clear bold voice within one nation is raised upholding *the duty to oppress.* The assertion of the right to disobedience derives directly from this duty.

We believe that the right to disobedience exists, and that it is of the essence of democracy. It is an extreme right, to be exercised only in extreme circumstances. But when such circumstances occur, this right imposes itself by its own force. And we are well aware that in the West as in the East there is still the possibility that the individual citizen, confronted with inordinate state power, be forced to choose between his narrow duty to the nation and every man's higher and graver duty to the living community of men.

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VARIETY

ENGLISH QUEERDOM

In England, we have a political device for solving social problems without solving them: this is called a Royal Commission. Faced with some burning question, the government of the day appoints a dozen men and women of impeccable repute (and rarely specialized awareness) who examine and report upon the problem. This task takes years, during which the government is absolved from doing anything and it is deemed irresponsible to recall that the question, unaware of the Commission, is still burning brightly. In course of time the commissioners surface from the depths, and whoever they may be, their findings are sure to be "progressive" since so many English social customs they are called upon to probe are not. Now please admire a hallowed piece of governmental legerdemain. The public, even after all these years, assumes that the report reflects the official view, or else that it will influence the government in its subsequent legislation. In fact very few, and sometimes none, of any Commission's recommendations ever become law; but nobody notices this because the subject is now thought to have been "well ventilated." (Why eminent citizens give months of their lives for free to these commissions may be explained by the Englishman's love of a committee, of judging his fellows, and of anything called "royal.")

A weird recent example of this social-political safety valve (it is no more than that) is the so-called Wolfenden Report of September 1957, named after the chairman of a commission that brooded for three years on the twin themes of *Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in Great Britain.* The first thing that will surely strike anyone not English (almost everyone) about this is, why are these two utterly distinct social questions linked as a subject for joint study by persons who would most probably be ill informed about them both (let alone about either)? When considering motivation in English social-sexual matters no theory is too improbable, and these can be advanced with confidence. The first is that the total difference between these two "sex problems" just didn't strike any governmental brain. Then, delving for unconscious (or possibly Machiavellian) motives, one may assess that the junction of these disparate themes seemed to the legislators to present a

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dual advantage: an inquiry on homosexuality alone would have implied our government believes it rules a race of perverts; and by neglecting what might be advised on homosexuality, it could then act with greater vigor on prostitution, in which it was really interested. This is what happened: the recommendations on homosexuality were ignored completely, and the maneuver of transforming English whores from unorganized street-walkers into entrenched call-girls was successfully achieved in conformity with the report's suggestions. Yet it should be noted the chief obsession of the government does seem to have been with homosexuality (observe the order of wording of the commission's terms of reference), and it was certainly the chief preoccupation of the commissioners. Two thirds of their report are devoted to the topic, and while in the case of prostitution no social-psychological analysis is attempted, whole pages are devoted to dissecting homosexual behavior. In general one may say that the commissioners' analysis was well-informed, sensible and humane. Their two chief conclusions were that homosexual acts between "consenting adults in private" should no longer be criminal, and that all charges in homosexual cases should be initiated by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and not by minor legal agencies.

A notion exists (outside our country, I think, more than in it—and outside English queer circles much more than in them) that the Wolfenden Report "altered the whole situation" about homosexual law in England. It did not. The law remains exactly as before with its maximum penalty of life imprisonment for the "abominable crime" of anal penetration (heterosexual also, be it noted). Nor have the arbitrary initiatives by regional police forces as to whether to purge, or leave well alone, altered very much. All one can affirm is that the Wolfenden committee declared publicly what many have long said privately; and sometimes in England bad unrepealed laws do lapse—though there is no guarantee of this, especially in time of frenzy. The English queer is thus in the posture of one who, invited to a banquet and offered an appetizing menu by a charming group of waiters, is told abruptly by the management the meal is off and he must go back hungry to the thoroughfare. The Wolfenden fiasco added insult to an injury: the insult being the rejection of the recommendations on homosexuality, and the injury the

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initial tactless governmental whim of coupling queers together, as criminal curiosities, with the harlots (not that the whores liked this much either). The queer therefore finds himself a built-in member of the criminal population: even more so, really, than the "professional" criminal who often, round about his middle years, undergoes a sort of menopause and abandons his culpable activity —a thing a queer is not likely ever to do. True, in this precarious situation the queer's spirit may be sustained by reflecting there is one sense in which the criminal laws are not applied: namely that there has not yet been, and probably never will be, a total campaign to track down each and every person thought to be guilty of homosexual acts. Against those detected, the law is enforced with fearsome rigor; but there has been no attempt to unmask all potential victims in the land. It is this that makes English criminal practice on homosexuality logically as well as legally bizarre: for there is no other crime one can imagine which thousands of people well known to the police commit nightly that would not be at once investigated and arraigned in every suspected instance.

The chief difficulty in computing the overall number of English homosexuals is to agree precisely what one is, since marginal and versatile sub-species are so various. Statistically, there is no reliable estimate (the Wolfenden report sighs for an English Kinsey), and personal assessments are subjective: queers tend for evident reasons to inflate their numbers, while queer-haters either do the same (to underline the "menace") or else reduce it (to show queers are a merely despicable fringe). My own guess is that while those who are exclusively homosexual may number at most some hundreds of thousands, those Englishmen, including large numbers of bisexuals, who have had some homosexual experience probably amount to millions. If this is so it may partly explain the duality of attitude whereby many who lambast queers in public tolerate them privately, albeit with a condescending leer. Class attitudes, still potent here (as the reiteration by all politicians that our society is now "classless" will bear witness), play their part. One may say that the upper classes accept queers—and gossip bitchily about them; the middle classes find the whole thing distasteful (as they do any ill-bred reality), but believe they should be "civilized" about it; the working classes are contemptuous but

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humane; and it is the petty-bourgeoisie, in whose image England is being molded by the "new conservatism," who are militantly censorious—their mood of aggressive, gnostic philistinism being a sharp goad for queer-hunting. High-minded queers like to believe such baiting reveals unconscious homosexual tendencies. I think this improbable; though it does seem to go with unusual insensitivity towards the human woes consequent on heterosexual "affairs," and a cheery indifference to "legitimate" sex deviations and the practical squalors of abortion. It is also worth reflecting that if homosexuals, as virile suburbanites suppose, are all "effeminate," then somebody must enjoy them. Who?

It would be splendid to record that in face of these tribulations English queer society has much dignity, but it has little; and unless dishonorable exception be made for gay society in the U.S., English queerdom must be one of the most unpleasant groups on the earth's crust. Possible reasons for this are the law itself, creating a harassed and self-righteous clique conforming to the stereotype willed upon it; the crudity of English sexuality, with its puritan greed and boyish concept of the male; not least, the national joy in censure of what is not known nor understood, but thought in some way to be agreeable. Of the queer world itself one may say its most odious feature is the peculiarly anglo-saxon impulse to deprive homosexuals of their own kind of maleness, and create "another" sex; and its silliest feature the dedicated zeal with which nonentities devote themselves simply to being queer—as if this were of intrinsic interest to anyone. Queer private speech is cloyingly revolting (see in *Encounter,* October 1958, *A Bit about Slang,* by Frank Norman, who politely calls the argot "slightly unpleasant"); queer clubs (with socks salesmen glamorously siping half pints of pale ale in plastic postures) quite triumphantly depressing; and queer parties (roguish, familiar, exhibitionistic and predictable) an unrelieved disaster. Conversation, like actors', has one topic; or if rising above last week's tittle-tattle, develops dim theories about "everyone" in history having been a queer (or if he wasn't, jealously yearning to be so), and blowsy expertise about who influential today is "bent." (Almost everyone again: "She is!" in tones of triumphantly arch complicity.) Recording this with a shudder, one must go on to say that English queers are generally brave (they

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have to be, or learn to be: no other group is subject to such legal penalties and social stigma), and reasonably loyal to one another. Under dire police pressure, they may rat, but they often don't even if the price is prison. In non-criminal situations of embarrassment they usually stand up publicly for their kind, and being shameless and skilled in wounding repartee, retaliate with venom. Outside this degree of solidarity, the notion dear to queer-haters that homosexual cabals "control" this or that activity (especially artistic) is exaggerated: queers are not hostile to "normal" men (though frequently to women), even when they "aren't trade" or "don't even dabble." But the accusation that queers proselytize if they can, is true enough: it is a tendency their situation in the U.K. encourages.

Queer attitudes to homosexuality can be surprising. The rarest in England is the one that prevailed in happier lands and ages: that homosexuality was, is, and always will be with us to some degree; that it is no ground for excessive shame nor misplaced pride; that moral problems do arise from it, but much more so from other profounder human situations; and that the essential spiritual predicaments of our sexual life belong to the whole area of sex, and not especially to this exotic fringe; in brief, that the whole subject is much less interesting than the preoccupation with it warrants. It is also rare to find in England the attitude common enough elsewhere in Europe of "All right, he (or she) is one—and so?" It is the disproportionate obsession of English society with homosexuality that is morbid (and ridiculous): the perpetual parlor game of spotting the queer that has to be played out on endless tedious occasions before the worth and achievement of the man will be considered. Among queers themselves one finds such oddities as the "respectable" anti-queer ("those dreadful boys" and so on); the groveler who beats his breast (or typewriter) and bewails to the heterosexual onlooker his melancholy aberration; the more "sophisticated" social masochist who develops fanatical worship of the law and its enforcement officers (perhaps because he prefers bullying "protection" to the menace of anonymous blackmail). At the other extreme are blatant queers: male prostitutes (professional and semi-so), public urinal athletes (conceivably coppers or their provocative narks), soldiers and sailors of certain regiments and functions (remarks about English guardsmen or engine-room mariners win

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automatic chortles), theatrical "c h o r u s boys" (not ballet dancers — no one more proper than they) — and so on deep into the hobgoblin undergrowth. Meanwhile, in the wings of this social drama there stand embarrassing, self-chosen "allies" (Homosexual Law Reform Society and so forth) who feel about queers as liberals do about "coloreds." (Impatient boredom greets this kindly interest in both cases. The racial and queer "problems" further have in common that both are man-made and totally soluble).

Edging, by now elegantly, his way into stage center of these notions is a figure reborn every time the theme of this essay is propounded: Oscar Wilde. Two films have been released this year about him, and he continues to dominate the English queer scene absolutely, with most unfortunate results. Wilde the human person and, in one great play, the dramatist, can never be praised enough; but Wilde the "homosexual hero" is a disaster. No one can blame him for not saying out loud and clear, in 1895, ""Yes, I am one —and now justify your law"; but because he did not say this, he was a victim and no hero. No one can blame him for a temperament that felt his whole life in terms of an ultimate disaster; but this makes his fate

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pitiful, not tragic. Because Wilde is incomparably the greatest English "homosexual martyr," his example still breeds fatalism and equivocation. To bring health and sanity to this whole matter, what is needed is that English queers stop taking themselves so damn seriously, and find the nerve collectively to defy the law—whereupon it would collapse; or if that's asking too much, to deny the mentality that perpetuates its unenforcable witch-doctor penalties. As for modern society's view of Wilde, one can affirm that though time has made him a "reputable" figure (London County Council plaque on the Tite street façade—the popular posthumous accolade), if he defied convention in the courts once more as he did in that mad libel action, he would be tried again tomorrow — and condemned. The difference now is that, emerging from Reading Gaol he would be greeted by television cameras, not scorn. The queer *cause célèbre* of recent times, involving once more a writer and a peer (if not a brace so distinguished), enhanced vastly—after a grim experience of prisons little different from Wilde's — both their public reputations. By selecting these men from many much more vulnerable in its copious files, authority betrayed, as so often, an Edwardian unawareness of the times it tries to govern. But when men of lesser social weight are picked by the lottery of homosexual prosecution, then total disaster can still fall (as it did on Alfred Taylor, who stood trial with Wilde).

One can conclude that English law on homosexuality creates one of the few situations in our land comparable to those in political autocracies. The homosexuals are a *maquis*: they speak, write and telephone with circumspection, meet clandestinely or discreetly, and identify one another by private introduction and cabalistic signs. Like a political underground—and unlike the bulk of criminals —they number some of the best brains and talents in the land, many with highly developed moral senses, and most of otherwise total respectability. Over such persons (unless they deny their sexual instinct) there hovers — as with a political underground—perpetual danger of m i s h a p or denunciation, whose effects range through nuisance and humiliation to extreme inconvenience and even "ruin." Since prosecutions ensue from random individual zeal, there is the further parallel of a civil police behaving like a political. Between homosexual and political suspects the strongest resemblance of all is this: the

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conduct of both is derived intimately from a state of being, an individual essence. Most criminals are prosecuted for what they do; queers, what they are.

Yet the real sorrow of the queer situation is not in its adverse social context, but in its nature. One might call the exclusive homosexual a "normal abnormal": normal in that his deviation is ancient and ubiquitous, abnormal because his natural life is marginal; he cannot be a father (and so never a real son), and he cannot even find a lasting lover (since the particular torture of a homosexual's love is that he most admires and covets a man who does not love men). Unless he escapes at least into bisexuality, his creative life has the severe limitation that he is doomed to a half-ignorant, ill-proportioned vision of mankind: a closed-circuit view like Michelangelo's, with its disturbing undue preoccupation of a great spirit with the flesh. English laws further distort this crippled state of being—a situation Englishmen accept partly by genuine indifference, partly because of the vicious streak in commercial Protestant cultures, partly because of the unattractive "innocence" that allows so many of our citizens to live long lives wilfully unaware of what happens in our country, and outside it in our name. Of course, this English insouciance is one way of living with a social complexity, if not of resolving it. And of course in a balanced view one must see that as social problems go, the queers' problem doesn't matter very much. But the strange speciality of their state remains: the multitudes of known yet conditionally tolerated criminals, the harsh sentences on those plucked for public sacrifice, the extreme contrast between private preoccupation and public silence—except at moments when a Royal Commission is appointed to examine, analyze, and neglect.

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CORRESPONDENCE

GOODBYE COLUMBUS, HELLO RADCLIFFE

Sirs:

It seems to me that Jeremy Larner's rather amazing article on *Goodbye, Columbus* in the Fall issue of PR really should not be allowed to stand unanswered. Not only has he distorted the book by an incomplete and unsympathetic reading of it, but he has misrepresented the "Jewish upper-middle-class w o r l d'' through exactly the same methods of over-simplification and derogation of which he accuses Roth.

Mr. Larner evidently considers himself an "informed reader" with regard to the world of this book, although he fails to say where he got his information. Since I also consider myself an "informed reader," let me set forth my credentials at the outset. I grew up in a predominantly wealthy suburb of New York. In my upper-middle-class Jewish household, as in the similar households of dozens of my friends and neighbors, athletics played an important part in our lives. Many of the women not only kept Kosher homes but were also active in Hadassah (as well as in the League of Women Voters: the two are not mutually exclusive) and consistently deplored the religious indifference of their children. Also, I went to Radcliffe.

Before I tangle with Mr. Larner on the "accuracy" of Roth's "details," which are after all secondary, I want seriously to challenge his total reading of the book. Perhaps it is necessary for a reader to bring a certain compassion to a book in order to be sensible of the compassion which the book contains. At any rate, one is certainly obliged to read with honest and attentive care. I think Mr. Larner has made a fundamental and disastrous error in equating Neil's point of view either with Roth's, or with "reality," whatever that means. We see Neil just as surely, if less explicitly, through Roth's eyes as we see Brenda through Neil's. The first-person narrative is not at all "an invitation to the reader to side with Neil and accept his point of view." On the contrary, it is a challenge to the reader to visualize Neil, to construct him if you will, as a multi-dimensional character whose personal difficulties and predispositions naturally color all his observations and judgments. Mr. Larner feels that Neil "does not seem to exist outside of his frustration with the Patimkins." But it is precisely in this encounter with the Patimkins that Neil does come into existence for us, forcing us first to stand back and appraise him, and then to come forward and reappraise the Patimkins and Aunt Gladys and all the other characters and worlds that we have seen through Neil's eyes.

Who is Neil Klugman? Assuredly he is something more than the "allegorical Poor Boy" that Mr. Larner makes him out to be. After all, the allegorical Poor Boy, at least in America, makes good. Neil is conspicuously not making good at anything. Bitter and ashamed of his poverty, he has neither the training

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nor the concerted ambition to lift himself out of it. Despite his protestations of maturity, he remains an uneasy child in his aunt's home, railing impotently at his parents ("those penniless deserters") for being poor and for abandoning him —at the tender age of 23. He lives unbelievingly in a drab world, but compensates for it by romanticizing the worlds to which he does not belong. That's why his picture of the Patimkin menage is exaggerated and over-simplified. He is no more willing to admit of the tensions, dissatisfactions and failures in the Patimkin family than the little Negro boy is willing to admit that the Gauguin paintings aren't photographs.

However, Neil's observations are sufficiently extensive and detailed so that we, the readers, *can* see what is really going on, if we care to take the trouble. What, for instance, could be more pathetically absurd than Big Ron at the head of Patimkin Kitchen and Bathroom Sinks? That business has meant a great many things to Patimkin Senior: it is his baby, as he might put it, his artifact, the vehicle and achievement of all his energy and ambitions; the road he built to carry him out of the slums; above all, and most Jewishly, his great gift to his children. But to Ron it is merely his father's business, without possessing any of the dignity of a family tradition, and with no inherent interest of its own. A business, incidentally, which his father's love and largesse have rendered him colossally ill-equipped to handle. Of course Ron should have been a gym teacher. But the business was destined for

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the children, and the children have never been taught anything that would enable or encourage them to get along without it.

Let's take a look at Mrs. Patimkin, whom Mr. Larner considers so implausible a character. She strikes me as a kind of displaced person, entirely lacking in the certitude which Neil wishfully attributes to the Patimkin family. Evidently she made a career out of youth, and having outgrown it she can find no meaning in her middle age. Her country-club world seems still to be unfamiliar to her. Her idea of social propriety is to refrain from talking about animals at the dinner table. She is jealous of her daughters for their youth and beauty—and also, perhaps, because of the ease with which they take for granted the wealth she cannot grow used to. Under such circumstances, of course she clings to her Jewishness. It's the only usable possession she brought with her from Newark, the only part of herself she still recognizes.

The same is true in part of the Patimkin athleticism. (Here again, though, we have to realize that Neil's frequently-reiterated doubts about his own masculinity largely determine his emphasis on the Patimkin brawn.) Having played stickball on the streets of Newark, Mr. Patimkin plays golf on the lawns of Short Hills: he is quite transparently a man whose only form of self-expression is physical. I don't see why Mr. Larner makes so much of what a social-climbing Jew would or wouldn't do. Mr. Patimkin isn't a social climber. He hasn't bothered to learn any manners, or, for that matter, even the English language. All he wants is comfort and plenty, and the opportunity to provide the same for his children. Why on earth should he think about the Newark Symphony? I can remember as a child, balking at having to practice the piano, demanding of my father whether he would rather go to a concert or a ball game. He chose the ball game, of course, with only the briefest apologetic glance at my mother.

With regard to Brenda, Mr. Larner doesn't seem to see that her athleticism, in so far as it is deliberate, is much more an attempt to win parental approbation, both for herself and for Neil, than any "aspiration toward All-American Girlhood." I don't find her either unintelligent or unsophisticated, or any different in kind from many girls I knew at Radcliffe who were trying to understand and evaluate their families without paying the price of total alienation from them. Brenda's dilemma is different from her mother's or brother's. She is enmeshed in the difficulties of money-equals-love, the very common problem of third-generation Jews whose parents have "made good." When her mother rejects her, her most potent notion of retaliation is to tear into bits the three hundred dollars that had once been given to her in love and throw them in her mother's face. She can't see any sense in depriving herself of material luxuries: the money is obviously there to be spent. Yet, taking so much, she feels obliged to give something in return. But what has she to give except concurrence in her parents' values, submission to their expectations: in a word herself. She feels the exchange

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to be unequal, but, as the whole diaphragm episode demonstrates, she hasn't yet found a way out of it.

These are very sketchy remarks. I only want to point out that this book, like every book, has a right to be read. There is no use in attacking a book with a battery of preconceived generalizations. *Goodbye, Columbus,* when read with care, proves aesthetically acceptable and therefore deserves to be taken seriously. When one has accurately discerned the nature of the social comment, then one has earned the right to quarrel with it. I personally find the social implications rich in suggestiveness and substantially quite valid.

Meryl Mann

SIRS:

Where I criticized Roth for cheaply cartooning the vulgarities of wealthy Jews and missing genuine sources of drama in their lives, Miss Mann goes me one better and finds high drama in Roth's cartoons. Apparently her interpretations are personal, and while I believe them as such, I can find no support for them in the text. Neil, for instance, is more than willing to admit the tensions and failures of the Patimkins: he exposes them at every opportunity. Nor is the emphasis on sports determined by Neil's self-doubting: it is presented as a fact that the Patimkins are engaged in some type of athletic activity every time Neil encounters

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them. To invest Mr. Patimkin's business with "the dignity of a family tradition," is pure projection: Roth derides the business in the same terms in which he derides everything else about the Patimkins. (Does Miss Mann think it's pure coincidence that Patimkin made his money in *sinks?*) Moreover there is no reason to suppose that Ron will not eventually get the hang of this particular competition, nor that Patimkin Sink feels any great loss of personal meaning in turning it over to him. As for Brenda's running herself and Neil around the track "to win parental approval," I must apologize for my disbelief to those Radcliffe girls who have found themselves in this position; but I rather doubt that most 'Cliffies would describe such doings as sophisticated.

Miss Mann would have me see Neil's narration from the outside and overthrow Neil's stated values in order to arrive at the author's intended meaning. I rejected this possibility because I could not find a single sentence where the author gives his readers a definite clue that this is his desire, and it seems strange to me that Miss Mann attempts to defend this interpretation without producing such a sentence. If we are, as she contends, to "see Neil . . . through Roth's eyes," I would like to have more than my own conjecture as to the location of those eyes. Miss Mann would find the collected reviews of *Goodbye, Columbus* interesting in this respect. Whereas the majority of reviewers accept Neil as hero, others admire him just as warmly as a well-conceived foil, and appreciate what they take to be his undermining. But regardless of how they stand on Neil, each reviewer comes up with a different interpretation of the action: obviously Roth's vagueness provides a field day for personal projection. Until the text shows me otherwise, I shall take Neil seriously. If one can not, the book is even emptier than I thought —for there are no alternative values advanced to counter Neil's, certainly no real "social comment."

Yes, I welcome Miss Mann's reply, because as a document it seems to substantiate my assertion about Radcliffe girls. Clearly it is a production far beyond anything we could expect of Brenda Patimkin.

Jeremy Larner

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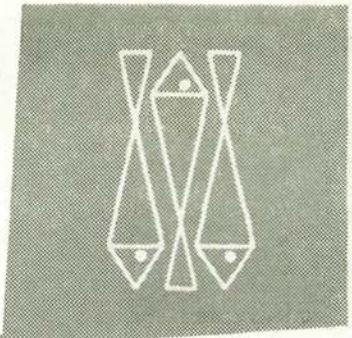

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